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BUFFALO SOLDIERS 1866–1891

INTRODUCTION

The African-American soldier played a decisive role in the US Army on the Western Frontier during the period 1867 through 1891. First authorized by Congress in July 1866, blacks were organized into two cavalry and four infantry regiments, which were commanded by white officers, but whose enlisted personnel were African-American. The mounted regiments were the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the foot regiments were the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry (later consolidated into 24th and 25th Infantry). All were quickly nicknamed the 'Buffalo Soldiers' by their Cheyenne and Comanche enemies. Until the early 1890s these troops constituted approximately 20 percent of all regular forces on active duty in the American West. By 1891, they had participated in approximately 130 actions against hostile Indians in Kansas, Indian Territory, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Dakota Territory, as well as in Mexico. Twenty-two members of the various black regiments were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for extreme bravery and courage under fire. Countless others received commendations. Besides their battle record, they performed the everyday task of protecting settlers, travelers and workers alike. They built roads and erected forts, plus thousands of miles of telegraph poles, all of which brought civilization to the American frontier.

A correspondent of the *Army & Navy Journal* left one of the best testimonials to the qualities of the buffalo soldiers. On campaign with the

'Captain Dodge's colored troopers to the rescue.' This engraving, based on a drawing by Frederic Remington, depicts the moment when Captain Francis Dodge and 35 troopers of Company D, 9th Cavalry, arrived at Milk Creek on October 2, 1879 to relieve the command of Major T. T. Thornburgh, which had been attacked by Ute Indians for about four days. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

9th Cavalry in New Mexico in 1881, he recalled: 'On the march, or in camp, they are cheerful and obedient. Their horses are well cared for, and in two companies I have seen but one man lounging in his saddle, and he had more white than black blood in his veins; no falling out of ranks, or watering at different times. If ordered on detached or dangerous service, they never shirk it, and will ride hours without sleep, and apparently unfatigued. They do not appear to sleep, and in camp seem to be awake all night. If washed out, as I saw one company, they will change their camp in the middle of the night, laughing and cracking jokes. There is every evidence to show they will and do fight well. Their own as well as other officers and citizens who have fought with them, attest this fact.'

CHRONOLOGY

1867–68	**Campaign on the Central Plains**	
	August 2, 1867	Saline River
	August 21, 1867	Prairie Dog Creek
	September 15, 1867	Big Sandy Creek
	September 24, 1868	Arickaree Fork of the Republican River
	October 18, 1868	Beaver Creek
1867–73	**Campaign on the Southern Plains**	
	December 5, 1867	Eagle Springs
	December 26, 1867	Old Fort Lancaster
	September 14, 1868	Horse Head Hills
	June 7, 1869	Pecos River
	May 20, 1870	Kickapoo Springs
	April 1872	Howard's Well
	September 29, 1872	North Fork of Red River
1874–75	**Red River War**	
	August 22, 1874	Anadarko
	October 24, 1874	Elk Creek
	November 8, 1874	McClellan Creek
	April 6, 1875	Cheyenne Agency
1875–77	**Staked Plains and in the Texas 'Panhandle'**	
	July 10 – August 14, 1877	Nolan's 'lost patrol'
1876–77	**New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado**	
	January 24, 1877	Florida Mountains
1876–78	**Colfax County War in New Mexico**	
	December 19, 1877	San Elizario
1877–78	**Lincoln County War in New Mexico**	
	July 19, 1878	Lincoln
1879	**Ute Campaign in Colorado**	
	October 1, 1879	Milk Creek Canyon
1879–81	**Victorio Campaign in New Mexico**	
	September 18, 1879	Las Animas River
	April 8, 1880	Hembrillo Canyon
	May 14, 1880	Old Fort Tularosa
	August 6, 1880	Rattlesnake Springs
	September 1, 1880	Agua Chiquita Canyon
	August 12, 1881	Carrizo Canyon

1885–86	**Geronimo Campaign in Arizona and Mexico**	
	May 3, 1886	Sierra Piñito
1889	May 11, 1889	Cedar Springs
1890–91	**Wounded Knee Campaign in Dakota Territory**	
	December 30, 1890	Drexel Mission

ORGANIZATION

Of the 178,892 African-Americans who served in the US Army during the American Civil War, 32,369, or more than a sixth of their number, died in uniform. In recognition of the contribution these 'men of color' made to the Union victory, an Act of Congress, dated July 28, 1866, authorized the creation of six black regular army regiments as part of the additions to the 'military peace establishment of the United States.' General Philip Sheridan, commander of the Department of the Gulf, was authorized to raise the 9th Cavalry. A recruiting office was established in New Orleans, Louisiana, and later that year, a second office was opened in Louisville, Kentucky. This regiment was placed under Colonel Edward Hatch, who had commanded a division of Union cavalry during the Civil War and played a decisive role in the Union victory at Nashville in December 1864.

The organization of the 10th Cavalry was begun on September 21, 1866, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Benjamin H. Grierson was awarded the colonelcy of this regiment. A commander of Illinois cavalry in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Mississippi during the Civil War, Grierson earned a reputation as a fearlessly efficient officer when he led a 600-mile mounted raid into Rebel territory in 1863. The 10th Cavalry took over a year to organize, but by July 1867 eight companies of enlisted men had been recruited within the Departments of Missouri, Arkansas, and the Platte.

These black cavalry regiments were organized on the general plan of white units, with the exception of one important feature. Each had a white regimental chaplain attached, whose duty included the instruction of the black enlisted men in reading and writing. Until that time, army chaplains were not assigned to specific regiments. Furthermore, both the 9th and the 10th Cavalry were designated two veterinary surgeons each, whereas the white cavalry regiments had only one.

Regarding the foot soldiers, the 38th Infantry, commanded by Colonel William B. Hazen, was assembled at Jefferson

Colonel Edward Hatch ably commanded the 9th Cavalry from 1867 until his death following an accident while driving a buckboard in 1889. (Library of Congress, USZ62-78224)

This young unidentified corporal, possibly of the 24th Infantry, wears an 1884-pattern blouse and 1872-pattern forage cap. He holds a Model 1873 Springfield rifle. (Herb Peck, Jr. collection)

Barracks, Missouri during 1866 and marched across the plains to New Mexico. The 39th Infantry, under Colonel Joseph A. Mower, began recruiting at Alexandria, Louisiana. The 40th Infantry, under Colonel Nelson A. Miles, was organized in Washington D.C., while recruits were gathered for the 41st Infantry in Louisiana, Alabama, and Ohio.

As part of the consolidation of the army via General Orders No. 16, the reorganization of the four black infantry regiments began on March 10, 1869. The 39th Infantry, based in North Carolina, proceeded to New Orleans where it was amalgamated with the 40th Infantry to become the 25th Infantry, under the command of Colonel Mower, with headquarters at Jackson Barracks. On June 8, 1870, this regiment was assigned to posts throughout the Texas frontier. Meanwhile, the 38th Infantry was transferred to Fort McKavitt, Texas, where it was consolidated with the 41st Infantry to become the 24th Infantry, under Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie. The 24th Infantry was to serve continuously in the heat and hostility of the Texas frontier until 1888, longer than any other infantry regiment of the army.

Enlistment

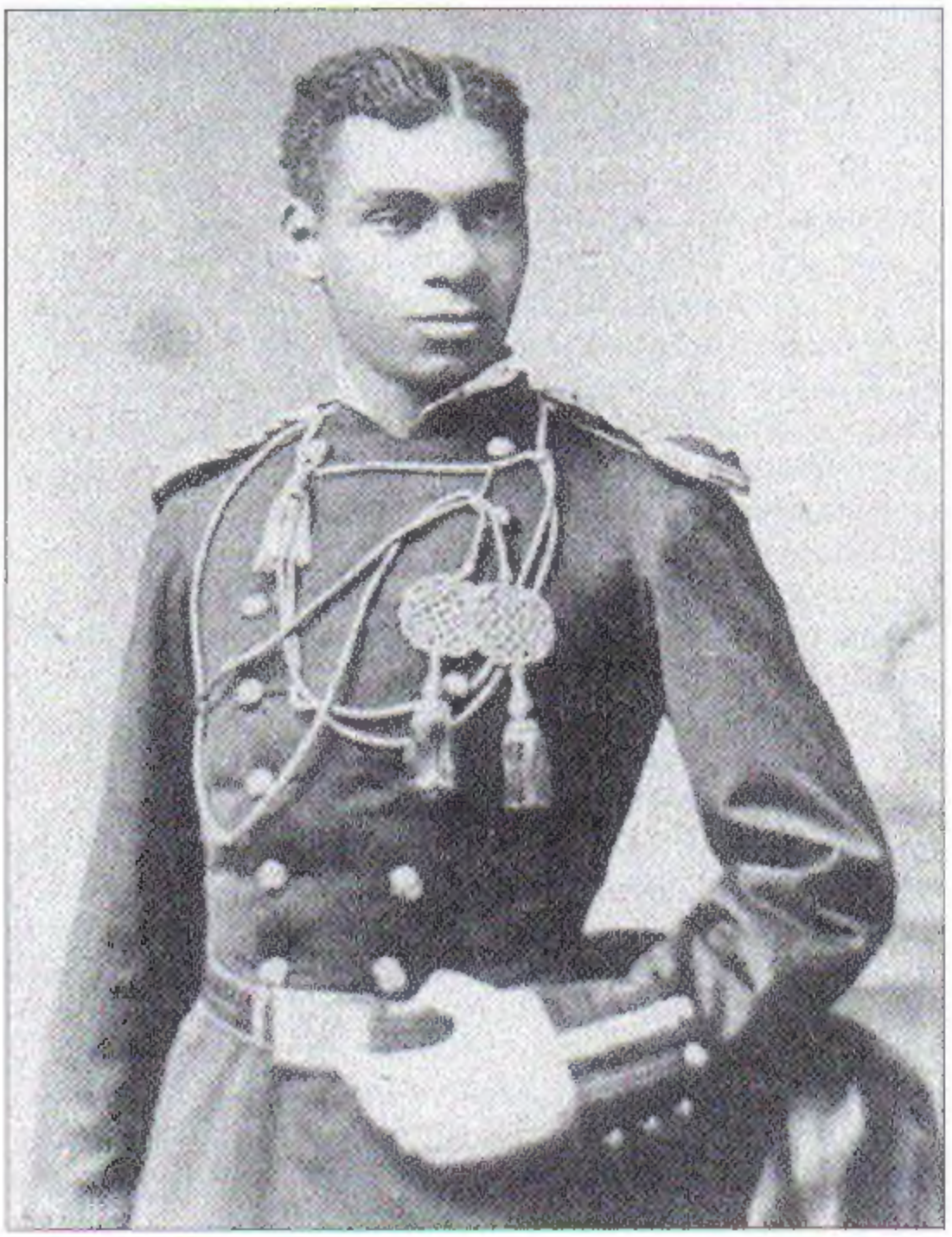
The period of enlistment for cavalry was five years, while the infantry served three years, with recruits for all regiments receiving thirteen dollars a month, plus 'room, board, and clothing.' Many of those who joined these new units had served in all-black regiments during the Civil War. Others were newly freed slaves or free blacks from the North. Almost 40 percent of those recruited into the 9th Cavalry had prior military service, mainly with the 116th US Colored Troops, stationed at Ringgold Barracks, Texas, in 1865. Although farmers and laborers constituted most of the remainder, about 10 percent were artisans or domestic servants. Recruiting officers of the 10th Cavalry were instructed to enlist 'colored men sufficiently educated to fill the positions of noncommissioned officers, clerks and mechanics,' plus other 'superior men' who would be a 'credit to the regiment.'

Regarding the original white officers appointed to the black regiments, all were required to have experienced two years' active field service in the Civil War with the rank of captain or above. Two-thirds of these were drawn from the volunteer regiments, while the remaining third were expected to have seen regular army service. Appointment to a black regiment was not popular, despite possibilities for greater rank and more rapid promotion.

The need for replacements for the black regiments was constant throughout the frontier wars, especially with such a short term of service

in the infantry regiments. Some of the reorganized companies of the 24th Infantry were almost non-existent by 1870. According to a report in the *Army and Navy Journal*, Company E, stationed at Fort Griffin, Texas, lost by expiration of service 26 men in January and February, 29 men in March and April, and 33 men in April, leaving on June 1, 1870, 'but one man in the company.' By October of that year, the unit was the smallest infantry regiment in the army, with only 431 officers and men on its roster. The 25th Infantry was not much better off with a complement of 482. At the same time, a concerted effort was made to replenish the ranks of the cavalry regiments. The same journal reported that all 'disposable colored cavalry recruits' were being collected at the Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania, and at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas, to be sent to the 9th and 10th Cavalry.

The first African-American to graduate from West Point, Henry O. Flipper was assigned to the 10th Cavalry as a second lieutenant from 1877 until 1881, when he was wrongfully dismissed from service. (Courtesy of the US House of Representatives, National Archives & Records Administration)



Black Officers

Although army regulations did not prevent the commissioning of black officers or the promotion of black NCOs as commissioned officers, not a single African-American rose through the ranks of the buffalo soldiers to hold such a rank between 1866 and 1895. Between the years 1870 and 1889 only 22 blacks received appointments to the US Military Academy at West Point. Twelve of these managed to pass the entrance examination but only three succeeded in surviving four years of discrimination and social ostracism to graduate from the academy. Henry O. Flipper, John H. Alexander and Charles H. Young graduated in 1877, 1887, and 1889 respectively.

Henry Flipper was assigned to the 10th Cavalry at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he supervised the construction of a drainage system that prevented the spread of malaria at the post. 'Flipper's Ditch' is a national historic landmark today. Fighting in the Warm Springs Apache campaign in 1880, he commanded the couriers who brought word of the renegade Victorio's arrival at Eagle Springs, Texas, from Mexico, riding 98 miles in 22 hours.

As well as fighting Apaches, Flipper went on to serve as a signal officer and quartermaster at several other posts, before being wrongfully accused of embezzling money from commissary funds while serving as Acting Commissary of Subsistence at Fort Davis, Texas, in 1881. He denied the charge, claiming that he had been set up by his fellow officers, who hated him because he was black. A

court-martial found him not guilty of embezzlement, but convicted him of conduct unbecoming an officer. Thus he was dismissed from the army and spent many years trying unsuccessfully to clear his name. Henry Flipper died without vindication in 1940, but in 1976 the US Army granted him an honorable discharge, following which a review board stated that he had been singled out because of his race. President Bill Clinton issued him a full pardon in 1999.

Both Alexander and Young were assigned to the 9th Cavalry. The former was attached to Troop M, stationed at Fort Washakie, Wyoming, in March 1888, and subsequently served in Nebraska and Dakota Territory. He was detailed as professor at the Department of Military Science and Tactics at Wilberforce University, in Xenia, Ohio. This institute became the first black college authorized to grant commissions to college students. Lieutenant Alexander continued to serve in this position until his death from a heart attack in March 1894.

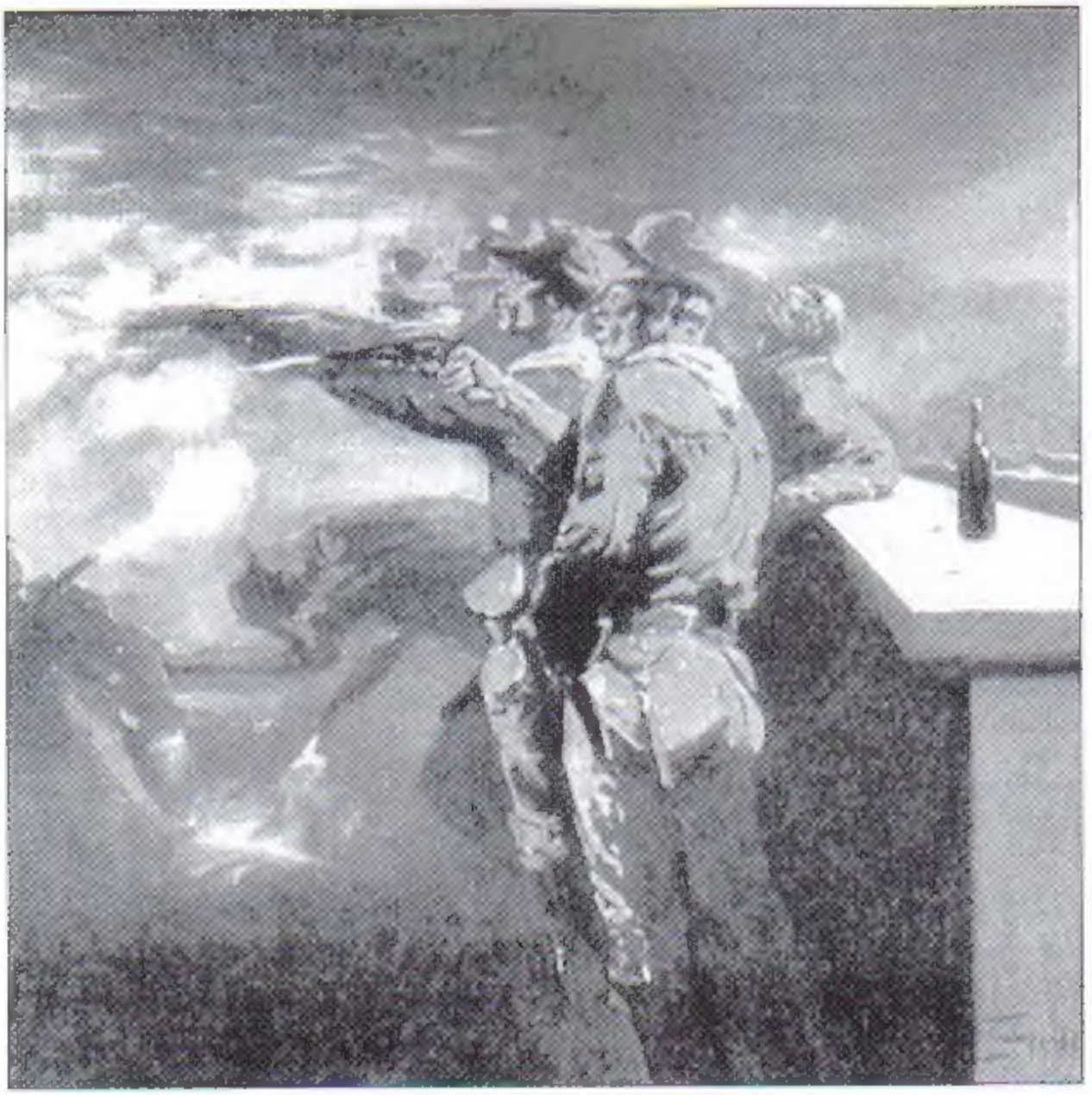
Charles Young graduated from West Point in 1889 and remained on active duty for 33 years. He became the highest-ranking black officer during World War One, and the first black officer to hold the rank of colonel. His service included assignments as Military Attaché to Haiti and Liberia. He was the second officer to hold the position of Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Wilberforce University. His command and staff assignments had carried him to Haiti, the Philippines, and the Republic of Liberia. In January 1922 Colonel Young died. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Discrimination

Inevitably, the black regulars were the victims of racial prejudice and discrimination. In 1867 a dispute developed between Colonel Grierson and Colonel William Hoffman, the commanding officer at Fort Leavenworth, when the 10th Cavalry was ordered to establish camp in a swampy area about one mile south of the permanent barracks. These two officers subsequently engaged in a heated argument on the parade ground in front of the assembled command when Hoffman ordered Grierson not to form his men too close to the white troops. As a result, Grierson completed his regimental organization at Leavenworth as quickly as possible and sent his companies on to Fort Riley for further training.

Worse still were the disputes that sometimes occurred among the enlisted men. On January 20, 1869, a 'small row' broke out at Fort Wallace, Kansas, between the troopers of the 10th Cavalry and the white soldiers of the 5th Infantry. This resulted in 'three colored men being placed *hors de combat.*' According to a rather unsympathetic correspondent at the post, 'One was wounded in the left arm, which was amputated by Dr. [J. A.] Fitz Gerald in artistic style. The other two were wounded in the legs, and it is a question whether they do not lose a leg apiece.'

The buffalo soldiers were also wrongly accused of spreading disease. During the summer of 1866, a medical officer at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri began an unfounded rumor that recruits of the 38th Infantry, being raised at that post, were responsible for beginning 'a most disastrous outbreak of cholera on the high, dry plains of western Kansas.' In fact, the Barracks was stricken nearly one month after the



Relationships between the buffalo soldiers and white civilians were often strained. This Remington drawing depicts the shoot-out at San Angelo, Texas, following the murder of a member of the 10th Cavalry in 1881. (From Remington, *Done in the Open* [New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1898, 1902])

buffalo soldiers had departed for Fort Harker, and the disease was most likely spread by civilians, either migrants from the wagon trains or workers on the railroad construction gangs.

Occasionally, the buffalo soldiers were the victims of cruelty from their own officers. During December 1872 and January 1873, Captain J. Lee Humfreville, Company K, 9th Cavalry, inflicted a number of cruelties on the men under his command while on detached service performing escort duty. Seven troopers were handcuffed and forced to march from Fort Richardson to Fort Clark, Texas (a distance of about 400 miles) tied to the back of an army wagon. At the end of each day's march, the same men remained manacled and were required to carry a log weighing about 25 pounds up and down in front of a sentinel. On another occasion, Captain Humfreville punched Private Jerry Williams, who was being restrained by two NCOs. The officer next ordered Williams to be hung from a tree, following which he hit him over the head with a club! He also ordered Private Malachi G. Pope to be thrown into a stream during very cold weather and refused to allow any of these men to light camp fires at night time. On December 4, 1873, Captain Humfreville faced a court-martial and was dismissed from the service.

The buffalo soldiers continually encountered prejudice among the civilians they were garrisoned on the Frontier to protect. One of the worst trouble spots was Fort Concho in Texas, where elements of the 10th Cavalry served alongside the white 16th Infantry during the late 1870s. Troopers visiting the nearby town of San Angelo were regularly exposed to insults and harassment from the local residents. On several

occasions in 1878 and 1879 the soldiers demonstrated their willingness to retaliate by shooting up town saloons and business premises where they had been threatened or refused service. The worst incident occurred following the murder of Private William Watkins by a white sheep rancher in 1881. When news reached the fort, about 70 soldiers, black and white, converged on the town. According to the report of Colonel Grierson, 'A good many shots were fired in the vicinity of the Hotel, but fortunately only one person [was] slightly wounded.'

In the face of common adversity, the white troops developed a great respect for the buffalo soldiers towards the end of the Indian Wars. In April 1891, a member of the garrison at Fort Custer, in Montana, wrote, 'The colored troops of the 25th Infantry ... get along extremely well with their white comrades of the 1st Cavalry, and the color line is exceedingly dim. So may it ever be. Men who wear the same uniform, eat the same rations, draw the same pay and fight for the same country, can ill afford to let the color of the skin form the cause of estrangement.'

A female buffalo soldier

In the absence of a thorough physical examination, Cathay Williams, the only black female to become a buffalo soldier, enlisted in Company A, 38th Infantry, on November 15, 1867. Born into slavery near Independence, Missouri, Williams was freed by Union forces during the Civil War, and served as a cook and laundress for the 8th Indiana Infantry from 1862 until the end of the conflict. Being tall and powerfully built, and calling herself 'William Cathay,' she easily fooled the recruiting officer of the 38th Infantry, who was anxious to secure volunteers to fill the ranks of his regiment. Her company arrived at Fort Cummings, New Mexico, on October 1, 1867, and for the next two years she helped protect miners and immigrants from Indian attack. When interviewed later in life, she recalled, 'I carried my musket and did guard and other duties while in the army, but finally I got tired and wanted to get off. I played sick, complained of pains in my side, and rheumatism in my knees. The post surgeon found out I was a woman and I got my discharge.' She finally left the army on October 14, 1868.

CAMPAIGNING ON THE CENTRAL PLAINS, 1867–1873

The first black regular army soldiers to see action on the Great Plains belonged to the 38th Infantry. By June 1867 this regiment was recruited up to full strength and shortly afterwards was posted along the Smoky Hill River in Kansas as part of General Winfield Scott Hancock's campaign against the Cheyenne. Duties included escorting mail coaches, guarding relay stations, and protecting the construction gangs building the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

On June 26, 21 year old Corporal David Turner and a detachment of Company K, 38th Infantry, assisted in the defense of supply wagons being escorted by elements of the 7th Cavalry. The black infantrymen had been assigned to guard a surveying party when the attack began. Realizing they were needed on the firing line, they jumped into a wagon

pulled by four mules and raced to reinforce the white troopers of Companies G and I, 7th Cavalry. Standing and firing from the wagon as they charged through the battle lines, the black soldiers joined in the three-hour fight and assisted in driving back about 300 Cheyenne led by Chief Roman Nose. According to Libby Custer, wife of the lieutenant-colonel of the 7th Cavalry, 'When the skirmish-line was reached, the colored men leaped out and began firing again. No one had ordered them to leave their picket-station, but they were determined that no soldiering should be carried on in which their valor was not proved.'

Shortly after this, seven companies of the 38th Infantry were ordered to New Mexico, where regimental headquarters was established at Fort

Members of the 38th Infantry stand guard behind the surveyors and engineers building the Kansas Pacific Railroad, circa 1867. Dressed in surplus Civil War uniforms, they wear 1851-pattern frock coats and white dress gloves. (Kansas State Historical Society)

A Remington engraving depicting a detachment of Company K, 38th Infantry, helping the 7th Cavalry repel a Cheyenne attack at Fort Wallace in Kansas during June 1867. (Author's collection)

Craig. This protected the central portion of the Camino Real, a trail which stretched from northern Mexico to Taos, New Mexico. Elements of the regiment were also posted at Forts Bavard, McRae and Selden. Meanwhile eight companies of the 41st Infantry were based along the Rio Grande River in Texas, with headquarters at the Ringgold Barracks. The remaining two infantry regiments were retained back east as part of the military occupation imposed on the defeated Southern States, with the 39th Infantry headquartered at Greenville, Louisiana, and the 40th Infantry on garrison duty in North and South Carolina.

Saline River, 1867

Meanwhile, the two cavalry regiments had reached their respective stations. The 9th Cavalry was headquartered with Companies A, B, F, and K at Camp Stockton, Texas. The remainder of the regiment was located at Forts Davis and Hudson and at Brownsville, Texas. The 10th Cavalry was posted in Kansas along the Smoky Hill River, with Companies I, K, L, and M headquartered at the stone-built Fort Riley, and the rest of the regiment spread throughout four other posts. The buffalo soldiers found Fort Riley in 'very bad order,' and spent much of their time cleaning and repairing the post.

The first fight between black cavalry troopers and Native Americans occurred on August 2, 1867, and involved Company F, 10th Cavalry, under the command of Captain George A. Armes. While trailing hostiles who had killed seven Union Pacific Railroad workers at Campbell's Camp, two officers and 34 men of this unit encountered about 75 Cheyenne by the Saline River, 40 miles northeast of Fort Hays. Armes ordered his command to dismount and fight on foot and later reported: 'I kept my flankers well out, and advanced until I saw what was supposed to be a herd of buffalo, but close investigation discovered them to be

In this photo by Alexander Gardner, a detachment of the 38th Infantry provides an escort atop a stagecoach in Kansas, circa 1867. The sergeant wears non-regulation leather gauntlets, while the enlisted men wear brass shoulder scales. (Kansas State Historical Society)

Indians coming to the support of those around me. I gave the command, "To the left, march!" and started for the post.' Under a blazing sun, the dismounted troopers held off their attackers during a running battle that lasted about six hours. With ammunition running low, they were pursued for about 15 miles until the Cheyenne finally gave up the chase as they neared Fort Hays. Captain Armes was wounded in the hip, while Sergeant William Christy, an ex-farmer from Pennsylvania, was shot through the head, and became the first black regular to be killed in action.

Prairie Dog Creek, 1867

On August 21, 1867, a force commanded by the same officer (sufficiently recovered from his wound), and consisting of 40 men of Company F, 10th Cavalry, and 95 men of the 18th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry, under Captain George Jennis, were scouting in several separate parties along the Saline River when the black unit was attacked by about 400 Cheyenne and Kiowa led by Chiefs Satanta and Roman Nose.

The black troopers fiercely held ground, but discovered they were completely surrounded and were ordered to dismount and herd their horses into a ravine. Captain Armes recorded: 'The Indians fought me from 3 to 9 o'clock p.m. 'Satanta' in full army uniform on a beautiful grey horse, sounded the charge with his bugle at least a dozen times, whooping and yelling, and endeavoring to get his men to charge into the ravine, but only getting near enough to have at least twenty of his saddles emptied at a volley or a dozen or so ponies killed and wounded.'

Eight troopers were wounded during the attack. At nightfall, Armes attempted to link up with other elements of his command. Finding his supply wagons guarded by 65 Kansas volunteers, he learned that Captain Jennis and 29 men were in a 'helpless condition,' having also been under attack since the previous evening. Sending out a relief force, they brought Jennis and his wounded in to safety.

In the face of further attacks, Armes mounted about 20 black regulars and Kansan volunteers, and ordered a charge on the Indians. Galloping firstly toward Prairie Dog Creek, he then veered up hill toward the main body of warriors. Surprised by such decisive action, the Indians scattered but then rallied, having been reinforced by more braves. In danger of being encircled and cut off, Armes returned to his main force, after which the Indians withdrew. Losses for Armes on this occasion amounted to one soldier killed and scalped, and 11 wounded, while 14 Kansas volunteers and two guides were also wounded.

'Buffalo Soldiers' get their name

It was during these early actions that the nickname 'Buffalo Soldiers' was acquired, although it is doubtful that the black troopers ever used the term themselves. Because of their tight curly hair, which reminded the Indians of the woolly heads of the buffalo, the Cheyenne, Kiowa and Comanche referred to the African-Americans as 'Wild Buffaloes.' At first the Indians treated the black soldiers with contempt, but after a taste of their fighting qualities, they developed a great respect for those they continued to call 'Buffaloes' or 'Buffalo Soldiers.' Aware that the buffalo was an important animal to Native Americans, later generations of blacks accepted the name with pride and the buffalo

symbol became a prominent feature of the regimental crest of the 10th Cavalry

During March 1868, the headquarters of the 10th Cavalry was moved from Fort Riley to Fort Gibson in Indian Territory, following which Colonel Grierson assumed command of the District of the Indian Territory. Elements of the regiment were involved in the winter campaign of 1867–68 to stop hostile tribes from raiding border settlements in Texas and Kansas. On September 15, 1867, Company I under Captain George Washington Graham was attacked by about 100 hostiles at Big Sandy Creek, Colorado. Fighting until dark, they lost 10 horses killed or captured and killed seven Indians. A Civil War veteran, Graham had commanded a company of 'galvanized Yankees' (Confederate prisoners-of-war recruited to serve on the Western frontier during the closing days of the Civil War) from North Carolina from 1863 to 1865, before his assignment to the 10th Cavalry. In 1870 he faced a court-martial and was cashiered for selling government property. During the next five years he became an outlaw, often finding himself on the receiving end of army gunfire. He was eventually shot dead in October 1875.

Private Reuben Waller, Company H, 10th Cavalry, took part in the relief of Forsyth's Scouts during September 1868. He wears a Civil War surplus, 1858-pattern sack coat and forage cap, while his 'ankle boots' were prescribed for mounted service only. (Kansas State Historical Society)

Rescue of Forsyth's Scouts, 1868

On September 23, 1868, Captain Louis H. Carpenter and Company H, 10th Cavalry, nick-named 'Carpenter's Brunettes,' were patrolling the Denver Road when couriers from Fort Wallace brought word that a company of civilian scouts under the command of Major George A. Forsyth was under attack on the Arickaree Fork of the Republican River. A field officer on detached service from the 10th Cavalry, Forsyth had received orders from General Philip Sheridan to 'employ fifty first-class hardy frontiersmen' to be used as scouts against hostile Indians. Having pursued a Lakota and Cheyenne war party, these men had been surrounded and forced to take refuge on a small island in the nearly dried-up bed of the Arickaree. There they dug in and made a stand. Shot in the head and leg, and with half his men either dead or wounded, Forsyth sent for help. After crawling through the Indian lines for several miles, two of his men finally brought word of their plight to Fort Wallace.

Leaving his supply wagons to catch up later, Captain Carpenter made all haste towards the Arickaree to relieve the beleaguered scouts. Company H arrived at the scene after the Indians had withdrawn, and the company commander's orderly, Private Reuben Waller, a former slave who had enlisted at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1867, recalled, 'What a sight we saw – 30

wounded and dead men right in the middle of 50 dead horses, that had lain in the hot sun for ten days.' While an army surgeon attended to the wounded, Waller and the other buffalo soldiers began to feed the starving scouts with rations from their haversacks. 'If the doctor had not arrived in time we would have killed them all by feeding them to death The men were eating all we gave them, and it was plenty.'

Several weeks after their return to Fort Wallace, some of the troopers of Company H took 'French leave" and went to Pond Creek, three miles from the post. According to Corporal Waller, 'When we got there we met the Beecher scouts, as they had been paid off. They sure treated us black soldiers right for what we had done for them.' For his part in rescuing Forsyth's Scouts, Captain Carpenter became the first officer in his regiment to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, which was eventually issued to him on April 8, 1898.

Beaver Creek, 1868

On arrival at Fort Wallace, Carpenter reported having seen the tracks of a large party of Indians headed towards Beaver Creek. General Sheridan subsequently ordered seven companies of the 5th Cavalry, under Major William B. Royall, to pursue the hostiles. Major Eugene Carr, the senior field officer of this regiment, arrived at the fort several days later. As Carr was anxious to join the men of his regiment in anticipation of action, Captain Carpenter, commanding Companies H and I, 10th Cavalry, was ordered to escort him on this mission.

Unable to locate the 5th Cavalry, despite a 60-mile scout along Beaver Creek, Carr returned to Fort Wallace, leaving the bulk of Carpenter's men to continue the search. On October 18, 1868, Carpenter ordered Captain Graham to make one final attempt to find Royall's command. Accompanied by two buffalo soldiers, Graham had not gone more than 1,000 yards before being attacked by a large party of about 500 Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho, led by a medicine man called Bullet Proof. Wearing buffalo robes cured, like that of their leader, in a 'secret manner' with the horns left on, many of these Indians believed they were impervious to bullets!

As Graham and his men dashed back through a hail of bullets to the main camp, Carpenter reacted swiftly and moved his command to higher ground where he corralled the wagons in the form of a horseshoe. Company H was assigned to protect either flank, while Company I was detailed to cover the rear. The black troopers were ordered to dismount, tie their horses inside, and take up a defensive position behind the wagons. 'A fire commenced from our seven-shooter Spencers which sounded like the fire of a line of infantry,' recalled Captain Carpenter. 'The Indians charged up around the wagons, firing rapidly and seriously wounded some of the men, but in a very short time they were driven back in wild disorder, leaving the ground covered with ponies, arms, and some bodies.'

Disappointed that their robes had not protected them, the hostiles withdrew, leaving ten Indians dead and three buffalo soldiers wounded. Forming his wagons into a double column, with men and animals inside, Carpenter subsequently moved his command back to the riverside, where they camped again for the night. Setting out on their return march the next day, they reached the safety of Fort Wallace on October 21, 1868. Six

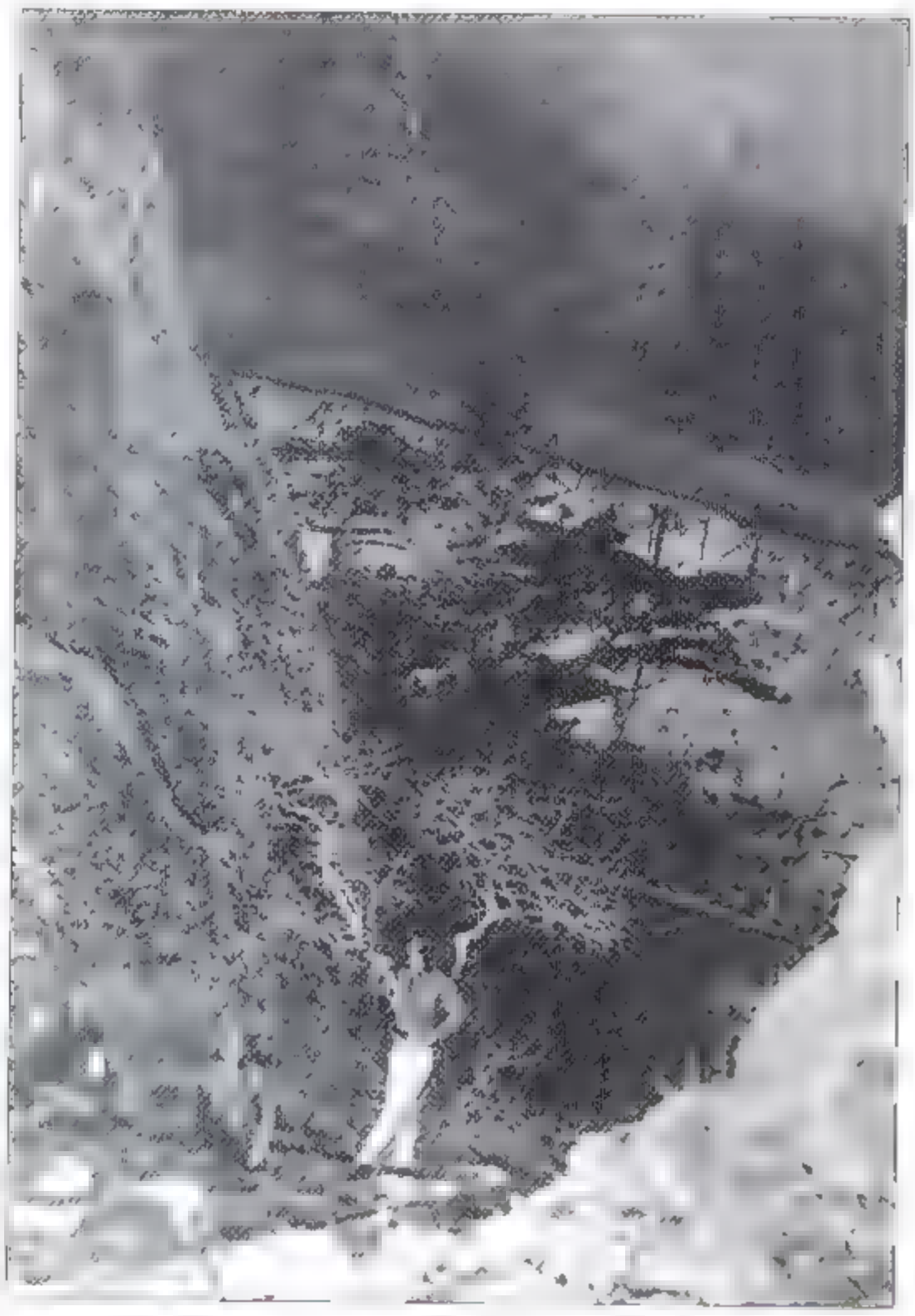
days later, General Sheridan published a general order complimenting the officers and men of the 10th Cavalry for their gallantry under fire at Beaver Creek.

The Peace Commission, 1867

With the commencement of President Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy on March 4, 1869, the 10th Cavalry became part of an army of occupation. During this period, the Plains tribes were brought into reservations managed predominantly by agents composed of members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Regarded as hostiles, the Indians who rejected reservation life kept the buffalo soldiers very busy.

During the summer of 1869, four companies of the 10th Cavalry established Camp Wichita at Medicine Lodge Creek in Kansas. By August of that year it was named Fort Sill. Members of the regiment were responsible for constructing this post, much of which was built from stone quarried nearby. A typical evening with the buffalo soldiers during this period was described by an *Army & Navy Journal* correspondent: 'The monotony of the camp is relieved by the songs of the minstrel troupes in the different companies until taps blows, when all is still except the howling of the wolf or the bark of the coyote, relieved by the 'tum tum tum' of the rawhide drum in the Indian camp [nearby].'

Three black troopers pose for the camera of Will Soule, who accompanied the 10th Cavalry to Fort Sill in 1869. They appear to be wearing 1858-pattern sack coats shortened to the approximate length of the cavalry uniform jacket, while the sun reflects off the brass insignia fixed to the tops of their caps. Medicine Lodge Creek can be seen in the background. (US Army Artillery & Missile Center Museum, Fort Sill)



From Fort Sill, the 10th Cavalry began to operate into northern Texas as well as Indian Territory. A detachment of the regiment escorted General Sherman when he inspected conditions in the Brazos River region following a Kiowa attack on a government wagon train on January 24, 1871. With a further massacre of a civilian wagon train on May 18, three companies of the regiment took part in the peaceful arrest of the Kiowa chiefs Satank, Eagle Heart, Big Tree and Big Bow, after Satank admitted he had led the attack.

At the beginning of 1873, Colonel Grierson was ordered to St. Louis as Superintendent of the Mounted Recruiting Service, and Lieutenant-Colonel John W. 'Black Jack' Davidson commanded the 10th Cavalry, by then headquartered at Fort Gibson, in Indian Territory, until 1875.

During January 1873, Davidson received word that the *Comancheros* were selling whisky to the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho. For

Troopers of the 10th Cavalry built Fort Sill in 1869 using stone quarried nearby. Many of these buildings still surround the old post quadrangle today. (US Army Artillery & Missile Center Museum, Fort Sill)

generations, these New Mexico outlaws had traded liquor, arms and ammunition to the Kiowas and Comanches on the Staked Plains, in return for livestock and other plunder of the Indian raids on Texas settlements. As a result, Lieutenant Richard H. Pratt and twenty troopers of Company D, 10th Cavalry, were ordered to set out from Camp Supply in below-zero weather to bring back under arrest those responsible. Although a severe north wind turned their march into an ordeal, the same weather conditions kept the *Comancheros* in their cabins, enabling Pratt to round up 15 prisoners, plus their baggage, which contained 'rot gut-whisky, guns, ammo, clothing and foodstuffs.' However, as they returned to Camp Supply, 13 buffalo soldiers developed severely frostbitten hands and feet, and were subsequently hospitalized. The *Comancheros* were fined only $10 and sentenced to a month in jail, following which they were back in business!

CAMPAIGNING ON THE SOUTHERN PLAINS, 1867–75

The principal duty of the 9th Cavalry stationed on the Texas plains was to establish and protect the mail and stage route from San Antonio to El Paso, and to reinstate law and order in the country contiguous to the Rio Grande frontier, which had been disrupted by Mexicans as well as by Native Americans during the Civil War years. Elements of the regiment did not settle well at their new posting. On April 9, 1867, a 'mutiny,' or more properly a protest, broke out in the ranks of Companies A, E and K at the regimental headquarters at San Pedro Springs, near San Antonio, as a result of the brutality of Lieutenant Edward Heyl. This officer had several of his men suspended from tree limbs by their wrists for failure to respond promptly to his orders. Before order could be restored, Lieutenant Seth Griffin, of Company A, received a mortal

wound, while Lieutenant Fred Smith, of Company K, was forced to shoot two of his troopers.

To compound their problems, the 9th Cavalry were not well received by the local Texans, who felt they were being subjected to a particularly harsh form of post-war reconstruction by the Federal Government and saw the assignment of black soldiers as a deliberate attempt to further humiliate them.

Eagle Springs, 1867

Troopers of the 9th Cavalry first brushed with hostile Indians on October 1, 1867, when two men from Company D were ambushed and killed by Kickapoos while carrying mail to Fort Stockton. Two months later, on December 5th, a noncommissioned officer in Company F, 9th Cavalry, showed great courage in action. Sergeant Jacob B. Wilks was sent with a detail of 12 men to carry the mail to Fort Bliss, at El Paso. During such duty, each man usually carried a mail sack strapped to the cantle of his saddle. Attacked at Eagle Springs by about 100 Apaches, Wilks recalled, 'We were on an open plain without any protection whatever, but we dismounted, held our horses by the halter-reins, kept close together and withheld our fire until the Indians charged up within close range. Our rapid fire from long range guns wrought such havoc that in the evening they drew off, after killing one of our men ... Contrary to orders, he mounted, dashed away calling us to follow him and charged right in among the Indians and was killed.'

Heading out under cover of darkness, Wilks feared further ambush along the trail and struck out through the mountains for the Rio Grande below Fort Quitman, carrying the body of the dead trooper strapped to his horse. Encountering a mule train heavily laden with army supplies, he warned wagon-master Naile that hostile Apaches were nearby and advised him to corral his wagons. This had hardly been completed when the Indians appeared and a furious attack ensued. Successfully driven off, the hostiles crossed into Mexico. While re-hitching his teams and getting back on the trail, Naile informed the black NCO, 'Sergeant, you just saved my train.'

Old Fort Lancaster, 1867

The first significant fight in which troopers of the 9th cavalry were involved occurred on December 26 of the same year, when a force of Kickapoos, Lipans, Mexicans and some white American renegades, estimated at between 900 and 1,500 strong, attacked Company K, under Captain William Frohock, which was encamped by the ruins of Old Fort Lancaster some 75 miles east of Fort Stockton. Assaulted on two sides and threatened from a third, the soldiers were saved when their corralled horses stampeded through the lines of their assailants. 'Had this stampede not occurred,' recalled Captain Frohock, 'it is doubtful if the defense against such overwhelming odds could have been successful.' Once in possession of the army horses, the hostiles and their allies withdrew and formed a mile-wide line of battle. Refusing to accept the loss, Frohock deployed the bulk of his company as skirmishers, leaving the remainder to protect the camp. 'I advanced upon their lines,' he recollected, 'which receiving our fire, broke and reformed to the rear, several times; always, however, keeping the horses behind them and themselves beyond the reach of our

shots.' The troopers kept up the chase for about four miles before running out of ammunition and yielding to the dark. After a vicious three-hour fight, 20 Indians lay dead and Privates Andrew Trimble, William Sharpe and Eli Boyer, who guarded the cavalry horses, were missing, presumed dead, having been surprised, roped, and dragged away.

The presence of white men among the hostiles indicated that former Confederate soldiers were carrying on the war that had ended for most of the participants 32 months before, in 1865. Indeed, Captain Frohock noted that several of his men reported seeing among the foe 'white men . who spoke English draped in Confederate uniforms.' Despite the loss of their horses, the action at Fort Lancaster proved that the black troopers of the 9th Cavalry were combat effective and could hold their own even when greatly outnumbered.

In their next large-scale action, the 9th Cavalry scored a complete victory over the Native American. On September 14, 1868, a scouting detachment under Lieutenant Patrick Cusack, consisting of 60 noncommissioned officers and enlisted men from Companies C, F and K, plus a party of Mexican guides, discovered about 200 hostile Lipan Apaches, under Chief Arsart, encamped near Horse Head Hills, about 80 miles southeast of Fort Davis, Texas. About 50 Indians were killed or wounded, two white captives were released, and 198 head of cattle were retrieved. Only one of the buffalo soldiers was wounded.

After the battle, Lieutenant Cusack gave his men a free rein in collecting souvenirs, which included scalps. Upon their return to Fort Davis, an observer noted that some of the black troopers were 'rigged out' in 'full Indian costume,' with 'most fantastic head-dresses' and their 'faces painted in a comical style.'

The 9th Cavalry Band performing at Santa Fe Plaza, New Mexico, in July 1880. Music was often used to lift the morale of the trail-worn troopers, and during the 1870s the band toured the various posts manned by their unit. The regiment was so undermanned during 1877 that these musicians were mounted and exchanged their instruments for Springfield carbines in order to chase renegade Apaches. (Photo by Ben Wittick, courtesy of Museum of New Mexico, Neg. No. 50887)

Pecos River, 1869

The buffalo soldiers were not always so successful in action. On June 7, 1869, an expedition composed of detachments from Companies G, L, and M, 9th Cavalry, under immediate command of Captain John M. Bacon and accompanied by Colonel Mackenzie, 24th Infantry, commanding the Sub-District of the Pecos, tracked down about 100 hostile Lipan and Mescalero Apaches near the Pecos River in Texas. The troopers charged the Indians and drove them back, killing two. During a second charge, the hostiles fled, some escaping towards the mountains and the remainder down the river. Pursuit of the latter was maintained for about 80 miles throughout the next day, but the Indian tactic of crossing and re-crossing the river, and frequently changing mounts, enabled them to outrun the buffalo soldiers, whose horses became exhausted. Bacon's

command returned to Fort Clark on 25 June, having traveled 432 miles over the most barely accessible region of the state.

Similar engagements occurred during the fall of that year. On November 24, Captain Edward Heyl, commanding a scouting expedition composed of 20 enlisted men of Companies F and M, 9th Cavalry, discovered the trail of a small party of hostiles near the South Fork of the Llano River. During the surprise attack on the Indian camp, Captain Heyl killed a warrior at close quarters, following which he was severely wounded by an arrow in the left side.

Kickapoo Springs, 1870

A 19-year old ex-slave turned sharecropper when he enlisted in Company F, 9th Cavalry, in 1866, Sergeant Emanuel Stance commanded a particularly successful 11-man scouting expedition out of Fort McKavett, Texas, on May 20, 1870. After riding about 14 miles, Stance encountered a band of Apaches making across the hills with a small herd of stolen horses. Forming his tiny command into line of battle, he ordered a charge. The startled Indians ran and the troopers captured nine horses.

The next day, on their return to the fort, Stance and his detachment observed a party of Apaches about to attack a small government wagon train near Kickapoo Springs. Once again he ordered a charge and four days later reported, 'I set the Spencers to talking and whistling about their ears so lively that they broke in confusion and fled to the hills, leaving us their herd of five horses.' Some of the Indians made one last stand, reappearing in the rear of the buffalo soldiers. Wheeling his command around, Stance ordered them to open fire, and later stated that after 'a few volleys they left me to continue my march in peace.' On July 9, 1870, just six weeks after the engagements with the Apaches, Emanuel Stance became the first enlisted buffalo soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Sergeant E. D. Gibson, 10th Cavalry, wears an 1874-pattern blouse edged all around with yellow worsted braid, even though this was meant to be on the collar and cuffs only. As the chevrons indicating rank are absent from his upper sleeves, this photo was possibly taken prior to the issuance of General Order No. 21, which permitted such insignia to be added to the blouse as well as the dress jacket and overcoat. He holds an 1876-pattern campaign hat in his left hand. His sky blue kersey trousers are embellished with one-inch stripes commensurate with his rank, while his shirt, vest and necktie are civilian private purchase. (The Frontier Army Museum, Fort Leavenworth)

Howard's Well, 1872

Typically, new recruits to the buffalo soldiers did not always acquit themselves well in action. During April 1872, the headquarters of the 9th Cavalry was transferred from Fort Stockton to Fort Clark, Texas. As Companies A and H rode to their new quarters, Captain John S Loud, who was in overall command, sent a sergeant and two troopers ahead to secure forage for the horses. Approaching Howard's Well, a

watering place en route, Loud's column spied a large band of Kiowa and Mexicans, led by Chief Big Bow, attacking and plundering a wagon train carrying ordnance and commissary supplies, also bound for Fort Stockton.

Traveling in a field ambulance at the head of the column, the wife of the commanding officer grabbed a carbine from the driver and began to blaze away at the hostiles. Soon joined by the black troopers, she drove the Indians off. As they approached the scene, Loud's command found the charred remains of 11 dead, among whom were women and children. They also found their sergeant and his detachment holed up behind a breastwork of forage. Although wounded, the three men had managed to hold off the Indians until relief arrived. After tending to the three survivors, Captain Loud ordered his African-American troopers, many of whom were new recruits, to track down the hostiles and renegades.

'After following the trail some seven or eight miles,' Loud reported, 'the cavalry came upon the Indians in force, on the summit of a steep and almost impassable bluff. Here a sharp fight occurred, in which, I regret to say, Lieutenant [Frederick R.] Vincent [Company H] fell while bravely leading and attempting to control his men ... [and] Captain [Michael] Cooney [Company A] was painfully, though not seriously, injured by his horse falling and dragging him while moving at a rapid gait. He, however, remounted and retained his command. The men of his company behaved very well, but being in great part recruits, without experience in Indian fighting, which was the case in Company H to a still greater extent, squandered their ammunition, as sometimes even old troops not well under control will do with repeating or magazine arms.'

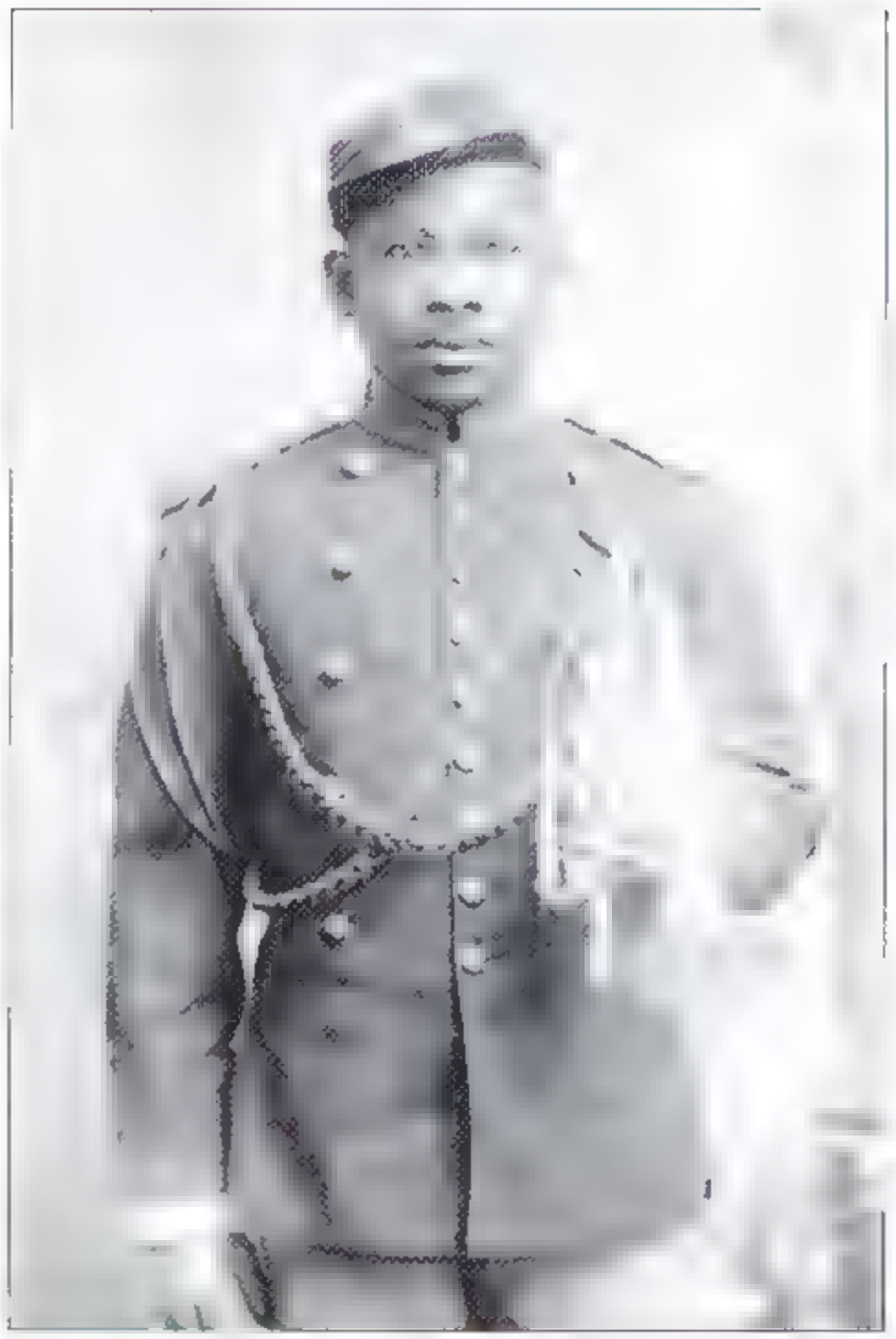
Subjected to a fierce counterattack, Captain Cooney and his command were forced to withdraw. The subsequent battle report stated that Lieutenant Vincent did 'not receive a necessarily fatal wound, but seeing that his new men required the stimulus of his example, he insisted upon being put on his horse, and placed himself at their head, when, from his exertions and consequent loss of blood, he soon fell exhausted and never recovered.' In fact, Vincent had been wounded in both legs and both femoral arteries were severed, following which he bled to death. According to his comrades, his dying words were, 'Tell them I was in the front. Good bye.'

First Lieutenant Frederick R. Vincent, Company H, 9th Cavalry, was mortally wounded while leading raw recruits into battle near Howard's Well, Texas, in 1872. His dying words were, 'Tell them I was in the front.' (Courtesy of Frohne's Historic Military)

North Fork of the Red River, 1872

On occasions, the black infantrymen were required to serve as mounted troops. On January 17, 1868, Lieutenant Bethel M. Custer, 38th Infantry, was ordered to pursue Indian cattle thieves with 'all the troops able to mount mules.' During the summer of 1872,

Company I, 24th Infantry, commanded by Captain J. W. Clous, was provided with horses and assigned to an expedition led by Colonel Ranald S. MacKenzie, 4th Cavalry, against the *Comanchems*. The climax of this expedition was the surprise attack on the village of the Comanche band led by Mow-way, at the North Fork of the Red River, on September 29, 1872. Attacking in 'columns-of-four,' MacKenzie's force killed 23 braves and took 124 prisoners, mostly women and children. It also dealt the *Comanchems*' trade a crippling blow by proving that the Staked Plains was no longer an Indian sanctuary. Upon MacKenzie's recommendation, several officers and men under his command, including Captain Clous, were awarded the Medal of Honor. On March 12, 1873, Captain Clous and his black mounted infantrymen were ordered to report for duty to Colonel Hatch, 9th Cavalry, and became part of the force deployed between Fort McIntosh and the lower Rio Grande River to protect settlers from further incursions of Indians and Mexican thieves. Company E, 24th Infantry, was also mounted and serving with the 9th Cavalry by July 1874.



By the late 1880s, the band of the 9th Cavalry was wearing a modified 1884-pattern blouse with a row of five buttons added either side. Worsted aiguillettes were adopted for bandsmen in the mid-1880s. Note the 'lyre' insignia on his cap, first authorized in October 1885. (Nebraska State Historical Society)

The Red River War, 1874–75

Both the 9th and the 10th Cavalry, and the 25th Infantry, became involved in a series of engagements fought in Indian Territory and the Texas 'Panhandle' in 1874. Known as the Red River War, the fighting began on August 22 when a Nakoni Comanche chief called Big Red Food, influenced by the exhortations of a medicine man called Isa-tai, refused to enroll at the Wichita Agency, at Anadarko in Indian Territory. This post was garrisoned by Company I, 25th Infantry, under Captain Gaines Lawson.

Battle of Anadarko, 1874

Receiving word via courier of impending trouble, four companies of the 10th Cavalry at Fort Sill, under Lieutenant-Colonel Davidson, were ordered to the Agency to disarm and arrest the hostiles. Recently remounted and rearmed, and with ranks replenished, the black troopers advanced on the nearby Comanche camp. There they came under fire from their rear as hostile Kiowas under Lone Wolf and Woman's Heart joined in the fray, enabling Big Red Food's band to escape. Both Sergeant Lewis Mack, of Company H, and Private Adam Cork, of Company E, were wounded, while several horses were hit. Davidson abruptly swerved his command into the tree-lined riverside, where the men dismounted and fought on foot.

Company L, under Captain Little, was next ordered to drive out the Kiowa, who had taken up position behind a commissary building and

corral. Circling Little's right flank, the hostiles splashed across the river and rode off toward the settlement of some friendly Delaware Indians. Pursued by Company H, commanded by Captain Carpenter, and cut off by Captain Lawson's black infantrymen who deployed towards the saw mill, they were charged and routed, but not before they had killed four civilians. Private William Branch, 25th Infantry, recalled, 'we went in and fit 'em, and 'twer like fightin' a wasp's nest.'

Davidson then regrouped his command, and led them swiftly back to the Wichita Agency, which he found threatened by a swarm of Comanche and Kiowa warriors who had climbed the nearby bluffs. After securing the Agency buildings, Davidson ordered Captain Charles D. Viele, with Company C, to drive the Indians off the bluffs. This was achieved by dusk. Under cover of night, the cavalry commander ordered the black troopers to dig trenches, while others were posted in the agency, the trader's store, and in a long line of buildings and large stacks of hay belonging to the settlement. About 300 Indians attempted to recapture the bluffs at dawn the next day, but were again driven off by Companies E, H, and L, under Captain Carpenter. Foiled in their various attempts to destroy the Wichita Agency, the hostiles set fire to the surrounding dry grass in hopes of burning the buildings down. But Captain Lawson and his infantrymen started counter-fires, and managed to save them. The 10th Cavalry sustained only four troopers wounded, and the 25th Infantry only one soldier wounded, during this action.

Elk Creek, 1874

Elements of both black cavalry regiments were among the troops that spent the next six months scouring the Staked Plains of the Texas Panhandle for about 1,200 hostile Indians who had joined Big Red Food. On September 1, 1874, five companies of the 9th Cavalry and two of the 10th Cavalry, under Lieutenant-Colonel George P. Buell, headed west from Fort Griffin. A force under Lieutenant-Colonel Davidson, consisting of six companies of the 10th Cavalry and three companies of the 11th Infantry, plus a section of mountain howitzers, advanced westward from Fort Cobb on October 21. The role of both these forces was to drive the hostiles into the path of two other large army columns under Colonels Miles and Mackenzie advancing east across the Staked Plains. On October 24, three companies of Davidson's column, under Major Schofield, surprised and captured a large Comanche camp on Elk Creek. As a result of this action, Schofield captured 64 warriors, including Big Red Food, plus 250 women and children and the entire Comanche herd of 2,000 ponies!

McClellan Creek, 1874

On November 8, 1874, Colonel Davidson's column struck the trail of a large number of Cheyenne near the North Fork of McClellan Creek. In an effort to intercept these Indians, who had already clashed with another column under Colonel Nelson Miles, he ordered Captain Viele, 10th Cavalry, and 120 men with the strongest horses, plus 40 scouts, to pursue them as swiftly as possible. According to Davidson, his force sighted the Cheyenne and chased them from 'the fork of McClellan's Creek to the Canadian [River], westward 96 miles, from whence the exhausted state of the stock [of horses] rendered a return necessary.

The Indians were pursued so closely as to force them to abandon ponies and mules packed, and were engaged by the scouts on the second and third days, but could not be brought to a stand. On the morning of the 13th began a violent rain-storm, changing to sleet and snow, which lasted until the morning of the 19th, freezing to death nearly 100 animals, and freezing the feet of 26 men.'

Cheyenne Agency, 1875

The Red River War was over by the beginning of 1875 and the 10th Cavalry was transferred to West Texas. However, Companies D and M of the regiment remained in Indian Territory despite their depleted ranks, and became involved in dismounting, disarming, and imprisoning the ringleaders of the recent uprising. On April 6, 1875, while a small group of hostiles were being brought in to the Cheyenne Agency blacksmith to be shackled, a Cheyenne called Black Horse escaped and his escort fired after him, accidentally killing a reservation Indian. In response, the enraged Cheyenne opened fire with rifles and arrows, wounding two troopers of Company M, 10th Cavalry, under Captain A. S. B. Keyes. Fleeing to a nearby sand hill on the south side of the North Fork of the Canadian River, about 150 Cheyenne warriors dug in in readiness for battle. Three companies of cavalry surrounded the Cheyenne position. Captain William Rafferty, with Company M, 6th Cavalry, was deployed to the east side of the sand hill, while the 60 men of Companies D and M, 10th Cavalry, took up positions to the west. Rafferty's white troopers dismounted and charged but were repulsed. Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas H. Neill, 6th Cavalry, arrived shortly after this and ordered a mounted charge, but Captain Keyes and Captain S.T. Norvell, commanding Company D, 10th Cavalry, informed him that the sandy ground to their front was unsuitable for such an action. Neill next ordered a Gatling gun to spray the Cheyenne position at 400 yards, following which a general assault on foot was begun.

According to Neill's after-battle report, the black troopers failed to join in and the attack failed, allowing the Indians to slip away under cover of darkness. However, according to Captain Norvell, the buffalo soldiers did attempt to advance, but were subjected to intense fire, not only from

James Satchell and Samuel Pipton, Troop C, 9th Cavalry, wear 1884-pattern blouses and Angora goatskin gauntlets. Pipton has a post 1885-pattern sharpshooter's cross on his chest, plus what appears to be a skirmisher's medallion. Satchell's crossed sabers device may have been awarded for swordsmanship. They both carry the Model 1860 Light Cavalry saber that was generally reserved for ceremonial occasions by the 1880s. (The Frontier Army Museum, Fort Leavenworth)

the Cheyenne, but from the Gatling gun in their rear, which came dangerously close to mowing some of them down! Some years later, Corporal Perry Hayman, of Company M, 10th Cavalry, recalled: 'As the first set of fours crossed the river, the Indians opened upon us and Corporal George Berry was wounded. We charged them . . While rolling around on the ground [after being ordered to take cover] my rifle got some sand in the breech. I had to take a stick to clean it out, and in so doing I got in full view of the Indians. It was here that I got shot in the right side. I laid down behind a stump, and again those Indians fired a number of shots, but none of them hit me ... I stayed there until dark, and then I managed to crawl away.' When pursuit was ordered the following morning, Hayman crawled out of his tent and began to saddle his horse, but was ordered to the rear for treatment.

Captain Norvell's subsequent attempts to gain proper recognition for the buffalo soldiers at the Cheyenne Agency came to naught, despite the fact that his company sustained three men wounded, one of them mortally, while Keye's company had nine men wounded, three severely. Following this action, Companies D and M, 10th Cavalry, joined the rest of their regiment in west Texas, with headquarters at Fort Concho, while the 9th Cavalry was transferred to New Mexico.

While stationed at Fort Concho, the band of the 10th Cavalry played a valuable role in lifting the spirits of the buffalo soldiers. The wife of one of the officers recalled, 'each member is a black man, except the leader, who is a German. To this man is due great credit. He has taught them the alphabet of music and can now compare them favorably with any band in the army. They certainly play well. While I write, soft tender notes from Schubert go wandering away into oblivion. When the troops return from their 'summer tour' in the 'field,' the band (every man mounted on a white horse) goes out to escort them in, all in full uniform, their brass instruments glittering in the sun and their inspiring martial music echoing 'over hill and dale'.'

CAMPAIGNING IN WEST TEXAS, 1875–81

On the Staked Plains

In response to continued cattle raids and horse stealing, Lieutenant-Colonel William Shafter, 24th Infantry, was ordered to sweep the remaining Indians and *Comanchemos* off the Staked Plains. On July 14, 1875, he led a four-month long expedition from Fort Concho that marked the first time the area had been thoroughly explored. The troops involved consisted of six companies of the 10th Cavalry, two companies of the 24th Infantry, one of the 25th Infantry, plus a group of Black-Seminole Indian Scouts. Determined to find and destroy the Indians on the Staked Plains, Shafter embarked on one of the most demanding marches ever made by the buffalo soldiers when his column set out from his supply camp on August 5, 1875. They trudged across 860 miles of waterless prairie in 52 days, arriving back at camp without success on September 25, having lost only 29 horses. Another scouting expedition led by Captain T. A. Baldwin covered 340 miles, including one march of 38 hours without water! These operations temporarily

swept the Staked Plains clear of Indians, and led to the beginning of a general settlement of the region.

Nolan's 'lost patrol'

Two years later, in 1877, trouble developed again on the Staked Plains when a band of Kwahada Comanches began to attack hunting parties and newly settled white homesteaders. On July 10, in the midst of an arid summer, Captain Nicholas Nolan left Fort Concho with orders to find and punish the marauders. His command consisted of 60 troopers of Company A, 10th Cavalry, many of whom were raw recruits. Marching to the headwaters of the North Concho River, Nolan eventually turned north across the Colorado River towards Bull Creek, 140 miles from Fort Concho, where he established a supply camp. At Bull Creek he encountered a party of 28 buffalo hunters, in company with the veteran Mexican American guide José Tafoya, who were searching for Indian cattle thieves. Without a guide of his own, and grateful for reinforcements, Nolan was happy to join forces with Tafoya, who had scouted for the army during earlier campaigns on the Staked Plains. Having scoured the area, the guide believed that the Indians were hiding at or near Double Lakes. Preferring to march at night to avoid the searing heat of the day, Nolan, with 40 troopers, set out for Double Lakes on the evening of July 19 in company with Tafoya and the buffalo hunters. He left a sergeant and 19 men to guard the supply camp. Reaching Double Lakes after riding for three days with little water, the patrol found no Indians, and spent the rest of the day

This Remington engraving depicts a detail of the 10th Cavalry conducting a 'scout' through the Sierra Bonitos, Arizona Territory, in 1888. Note the officer second in line is wearing a white summer helmet. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

digging holes in the dried up lake bed in order to find the little water that remained. Following this, and for the next eight days, the party staggered on behind Tafoya – more in search of water than of Indians, and finding neither! A routine army scout was turning into disaster.

On the fifth day of this march, some of Nolan's new recruits were overcome with exhaustion and dehydration, and began to fall from their saddles. Detailing Sergeant William Umbles to stay with two of the weakest troopers, and instructing him to bring them into camp once they had rested, Nolan continued after Tafoya, who had ridden on ahead with a small group of the fittest civilians to look for water. With so many men unable to ride, Nolan was forced to make a 'dry' bivouac that night, and was amazed to witness the mutinous Sergeant Umbles and the sick men ride by 'within easy hailing distance' without halting. During the same night, the horses belonging to some of the buffalo hunters stampeded. Having lost his guide, Nolan decided to take his men back to Double Lakes where he knew they would find some water.

This first sergeant of Company B, 24th Infantry, wears the five-button blouse with exterior pockets adopted in late 1884. The crossed rifles insignia on his 1872-pattern forage cap was adopted via General Orders No. 96 on November 19, 1875. (Herb Peck, Jr. collection)

On the return march, Corporal Gilmore deserted after having been ordered to remain behind to look after another sick trooper. Lance Corporal Freemont and two enlisted men also deserted the command shortly after. Nolan arrived back at Double Lakes having been without water for 86 hours! During this last march the buffalo soldiers survived by drinking the blood of their dead horses and their own urine. Nolan's men straggled back into Double Lakes on July 30, and the next day help arrived in the form of Captain P. L. Lee, with Company G, 10th Cavalry, who had happened by on a scout from Fort Griffin. Lee accompanied Nolan back to his supply camp, where they rested further.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Umbles and Corporals Gilmore and Freemont had arrived back at Fort Concho to falsely report that Indians had attacked their unit, and that 'two officers and twenty-six enlisted soldiers had been killed.' The 'Staked Plains Horror,' as the *Galveston Daily News* called it, quickly grabbed the attention of the press across the nation. In response to the news from the deserters, a column under Lieutenant R. G. Smither was sent out to find Nolan. After medical aid and rest, the patrol finally arrived back at Fort Concho on August 14, 1877. Although most of Nolan's troopers had eventually straggled back into his supply camp, four men had died. Sergeant Umbles and Corporals Gilmore and Freemont were clapped in irons, court-martialed and dishonorably discharged.

This infantry post quartermaster sergeant wears the cap insignia prescribed in 1885, which consisted of a gilt wreath surrounding a German silver key and quill. (Kansas State Historical Society)

Across the Border

Meanwhile, elements of the 10th Cavalry formed the only mounted troops assigned to protect the Rio Grande area. In the face of constant Indian raids across the river, and further trouble from Mexican bandits and revolutionaries who sought 'refuge' on American soil, General E. O. C. Ord, commanding the Department of Texas, ordered Colonel Shafter at Fort Duncan to organize an expedition to attack a large Lipan and Kickapoo camp known to be in the vicinity of Saragossa, Mexico. Shafter's column consisted of three companies of the 10th Cavalry, detachments of the 24th and 25th Infantry, and a party of Black-Seminole scouts. After pushing southwest for five days, Shafter became concerned that he might be cut off by Mexican troops if his whole force advanced further. He therefore ordered Lieutenant George Evans, with 20 picked troopers, plus Lieutenant John L. Bullis, commanding the Seminole scouts, to march on to the village.

Evans and Bullis covered the remaining 110 miles in just 24 hours, and located the camp of 23 lodges about five miles from Saragossa. Attacking at dawn on July 30, 1876, they took the Indians completely by surprise and savage hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The Indians were swiftly put to flight, leaving 14 warriors dead. The lodges were burned and the strike force swiftly retraced its steps to the main command. Shafter promptly withdrew to the border, where the only man to be lost during the whole operation, Trooper Joseph Titus, Company B, 10th Cavalry, was drowned crossing back over the Rio Grande. Elements of the regiment conducted further successful expeditions into Mexico throughout the remainder of the year, and by August 1877 a total of 94 Mexican revolutionaries were captured north of the border.

CAMPAIGNING IN NEW MEXICO, ARIZONA AND COLORADO, 1876–90

Florida Mountains, 1876–77

The 9th Cavalry transferred to the District of New Mexico during the winter and spring of 1876–77. Scattered between nine forts and one camp, they began their campaign against the renegade Apaches led by Geronimo and Juh. The first clash between the buffalo soldiers and the Apaches took place in September 1876, when Captain Henry Carroll and 25 troopers of Company F, stationed at Fort Selden, encountered and attacked some renegades in the Florida Mountains, killing one warrior and wounding three.

A more dramatic action occurred on January 24, 1877, when a band of about 50 Chiricahuas attacked a detachment of the 6th Cavalry in Arizona and then headed east into an area patrolled by Company C, 9th Cavalry, based at Fort Bayard. Lieutenant Henry J. Wright, with six enlisted men and three Navajo scouts, set out to track down the renegades and force them back to their reservation. On the third day of the patrol, the Apaches were intercepted in the Florida Mountains, approximately 55 miles south of Silver City. Although greatly outnumbered, Lieutenant Wright and his men dismounted and approached the Apaches but, after a fruitless parley, the officer noticed that the Indians had quietly surrounded his patrol. He ordered his men to push their way through to their horses, but as they did so a deadly fight at close quarters broke out. Corporal Clinton Greaves fired his carbine until it was empty and then swung it like a club, knocking aside the Apaches and smashing a gap through the encircling warriors. While running for their mounts, the troopers were pinned down by the gunfire of other Apaches who had taken cover in surrounding rocks. Again Corporal Greaves reacted and raced for the horses while firing, fatally wounding two of the attackers. Rushing the mounts to his companions, Greaves enabled the cavalrymen to escape, taking 11 of the Indian horses with them. In the encounter, five of the Apaches were killed and not one of the cavalry patrol was seriously wounded.

Corporal Greaves was awarded the Medal of Honor, while three troopers and a Navajo scout received commendations for their part in the action.

The artist Remington sketched this campfire scene in Arizona Territory in 1888 when invited to take part in a 'scout' conducted by the 10th Cavalry. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

Civil Disorders, 1876–78

During 1876–78 the 9th Cavalry became involved in several civil disorders. A dispute over a two million acre land grant in Colfax County, New Mexico, owned by the British-sponsored Maxwell Land Grant and Railway Company, involved the 9th Cavalry as a peacekeeping force during March 1876. Following several shootings and vigilante hangings, 30 troopers from Company L, under Captain Francis Moore, were ordered to Cimarron from Fort Union. There they were successfully assigned as detachments to escort law enforcement officers making arrests. Taking up quarters in a livery stable behind the St. James Hotel, Moore instructed his men to stay away from the saloons. Needless to say, several ignored orders and were subsequently shot dead during an argument with some Texan cowboys. A few days later, another trooper robbed and killed two civilians. He was tried, found guilty and hanged.

In mid-December 1877, nine companies of the regiment were scraped together and ordered back to Texas, where rival factions were fighting over the rights to salt deposits at the foot of Guadalupe Peak, 100 miles east of El Paso. Arriving at the nearby township of San Elizario with an advanced guard of 54 troopers and two howitzers, Colonel Hatch quickly assumed control and separated the warring factions with his trail-hardened buffalo soldiers.

The Lincoln County War, 1877–78

Elements of the 9th Cavalry next became involved in protecting life and property during the Lincoln County War. For many years Lincoln County, New Mexico, had enjoyed the unenviable reputation of having more thieves and murderers per square mile than any county in the American West. By 1878 a gang led by Alexander McSween, which included the likes of William Bonney, alias 'Billy the Kid,' was involved in a bloody conflict with the Murphy–Dolan faction. Situated a few miles

A troop of the 9th Cavalry parades in full dress sometime after the regimental headquarters was transferred to Fort McKinney, Wyoming, in 1885. (American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming)

north of the township of Lincoln was Fort Stanton, which was garrisoned by Companies F, H and M, 9th Cavalry, under Lieutenant-Colonel N. A. M. Dudley. While carrying a note from Dudley to Sheriff George Peppin during July of that year, Private Berry Robinson of Company H fought his way single-handed through a small gang of outlaws, only to be fired on again when he entered Lincoln. Thrown from his horse as bullets kicked up dirt around him, the courier narrowly escaped death by scrambling for cover behind a hotel building.

Although half of his troopers were out scouting for renegade Indians in the Guadalupe and Sacramento mountains, Dudley was determined to restore law and order to Lincoln, which next experienced about four days' continual fighting. On July 19, 1878, he assembled a force consisting of 11 buffalo soldiers, 24 white infantrymen, one Gatling gun, and one 12-pounder brass mountain howitzer. Wearing full dress uniforms to create maximum impact, and supplied with 2,000 rounds of ammunition, this force rode into Lincoln as 'neutrals' determined to protect the women and children of the community. Setting up camp in the middle of the town, Dudley pointed his howitzer at the building serving as headquarters for the McSween gang, and threatened to send a shell through it if his men were fired on again. Encouraged by support from the army, Sheriff Peppin set fire to the McSween building and drove most of the occupants out. Billy the Kid and others fled, while Alexander McSween died in the blaze.

The Ute Campaign, 1879

After years of white encroachment and mismanagement by Indian agencies, serious trouble broke out among the White River Utes on the border with New Mexico and Colorado during September 1879. In response, a mixed battalion of cavalry and infantry led by Major Thomas T. Thornburgh, 4th Infantry, left Fort Frederick Steele, Wyoming, for the scene of the outbreak, while Captain Francis Dodge, commanding Company D, 9th Cavalry, set out from an encampment on the Grand River. Thornburgh's column reached Milk Creek Canyon, Colorado, about 25 miles from the White River Agency, on September 29, but was ambushed and attacked by several hundred Utes. Forced to take up a defensive position behind a hastily prepared breastwork of dead animals and overturned wagons, Thornburgh was killed during the first few minutes of action, but his men held out for three days under the second-in-command, Captain J. Scott Payne. Realizing he was surrounded, Payne ordered his scout, J. P. Rankin, to fetch help. Meanwhile, Captain Dodge received word of their plight and rode hard for 23 hours to reach the beleaguered troopers at Milk Creek.

Facing dawn and another day of bitter fighting on October 1, Payne's force was greatly relieved to see Captain Dodge and his 35 black troopers galloping full pelt towards them out of the rising sun. A soldier in Payne's command recalled, 'Cheer after cheer rent the air from our trenches when we ascertained who were coming. A lull in the firing enabled them to come in and shelter their horses as well as possible. They took [to] the fortifications quickly when the attack redoubled its fury. Had the heights been accessible, Captain Dodge would have charged them with his company, while we covered him from our rifle pits, but this was utterly impossible, the ascent being almost perpendicular.' Another white trooper in the same command naively

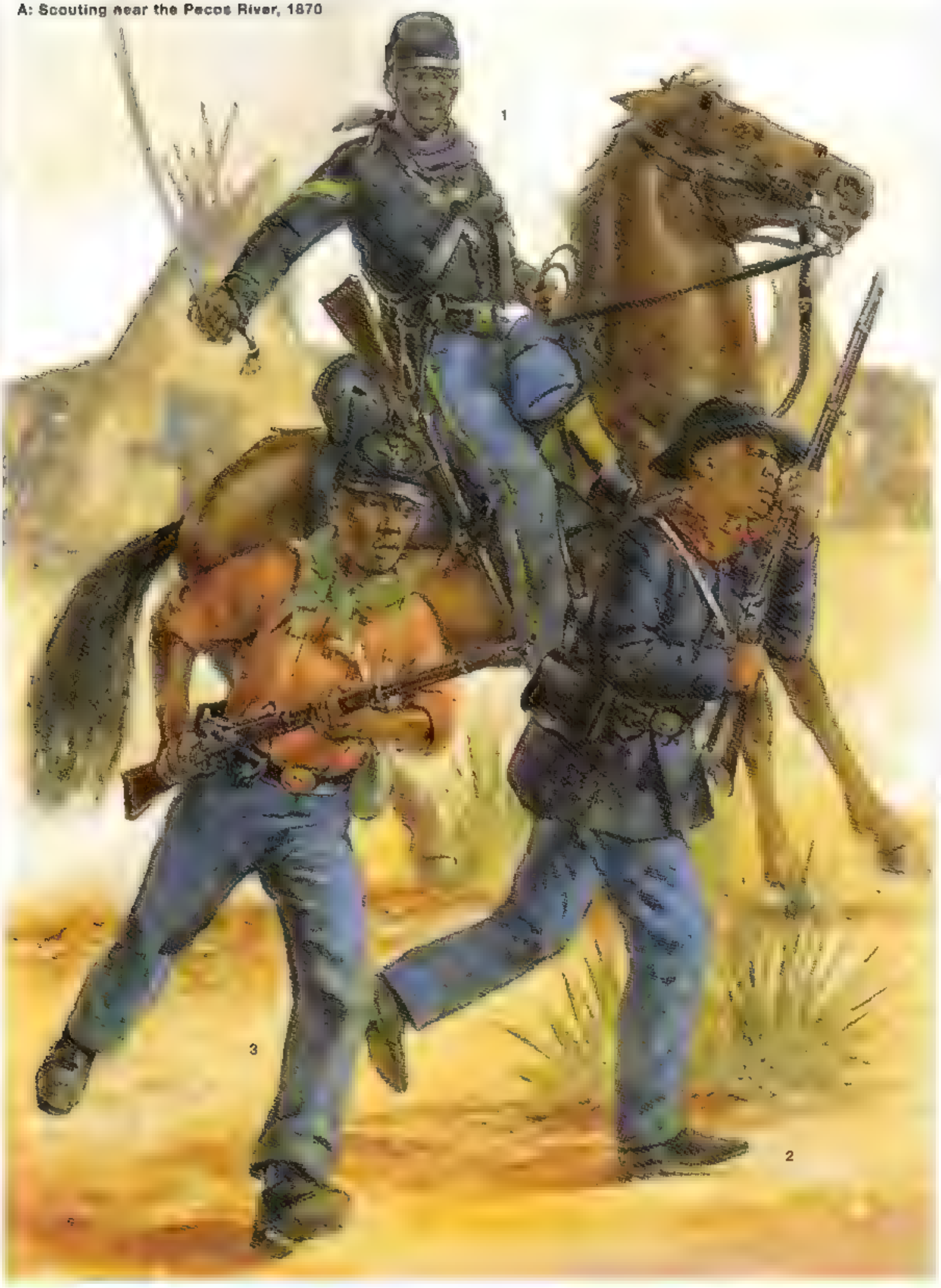
Competition to be the best turned out unit in the regiment was fierce between cavalry companies. This engraving shows members of one of the black cavalry regiments assisting a trooper in full dress to mount. The dismounted enlisted men wear 1872-pattern white canvas overalls designed especially for stable duty. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

revealed his racial prejudice by commenting, 'We forgot all about the danger of exposing ourselves and leaped up out of the pits to shake hands all around. Why, we took those darkies in right along with us in the pits. We let 'em sleep with us, and they took their knives and cut off slips of bacon from the same sides as we did.'

Further attacks raged throughout the remainder of that day, during which Captain Dodge recorded, 'Indians all around us and keep up a plaguing fire on our pit. All our animals are dead and we cannot communicate with the agency ... The command is in good spirits, and we can hold out till succor arrives.' As night fell Sergeant Henry Johnson, Company D, 9th Cavalry, distinguished himself by leaving his fortified cover under heavy fire in order to offer encouragement to the men. Under cover of darkness on October 2, the same man showed extreme bravery when he fought his way to the nearby riverside, and returned with several pails filled with water to relieve the thirst of the wounded. On this occasion, Johnson is said to have commented, 'Well, boss, I'se powerfully dry, and somebody's got to git water fo' me, or I'se got to git water fo' somebody!' As a result, Sergeant Johnson eventually received the Medal of Honor for courage under fire at Milk Creek.

After nearly a week, the siege of Milk Creek was lifted at dawn on October 5, 1879, when five companies of the 5th Cavalry, under Colonel Wesley Merritt, finally drove off the Utes. In a dispatch sent the same day, Merritt complimented the involvement of Captain Dodge and his buffalo soldiers, stating: 'Too much praise cannot be given this gallant officer and his command for the very praiseworthy act in the reinforcement of Payne's command.' The bravery of Company D, 9th Cavalry, was further acknowledged when 'the colored citizens' of Denver, Colorado, gave a rousing reception in their honor as the troopers passed through that city en route to take up winter quarters on October 22, 1879. By the end of the year, the regimental band of the 9th Cavalry had added a new tune to its repertoire called 'Captain Dodge's Relief.' *(continued on page 41)*

A: Scouting near the Pecos River, 1870



A

B: Garrison life, 1873–1880

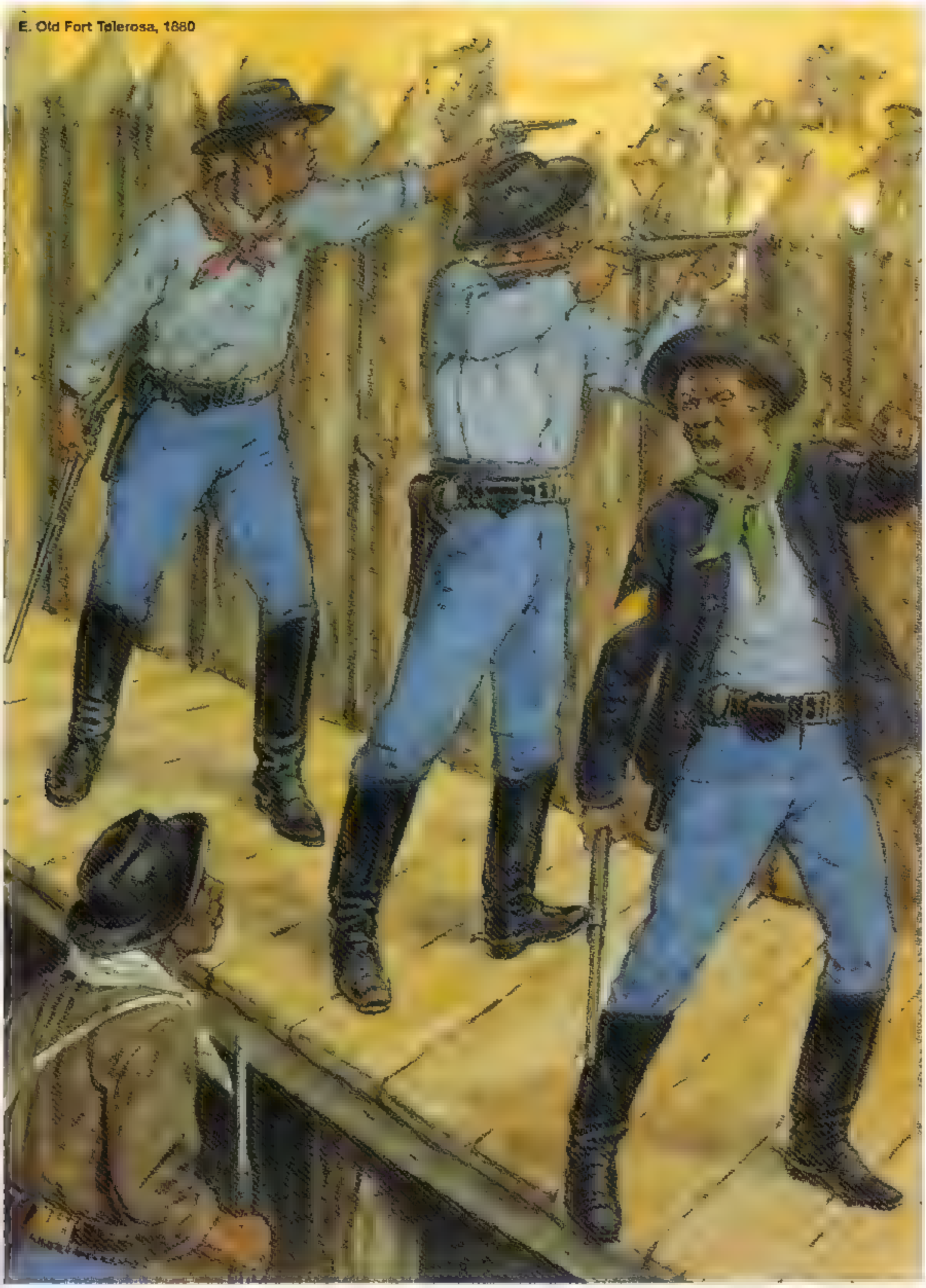
B

C: Skirmish at Elk Creek, 1874

C

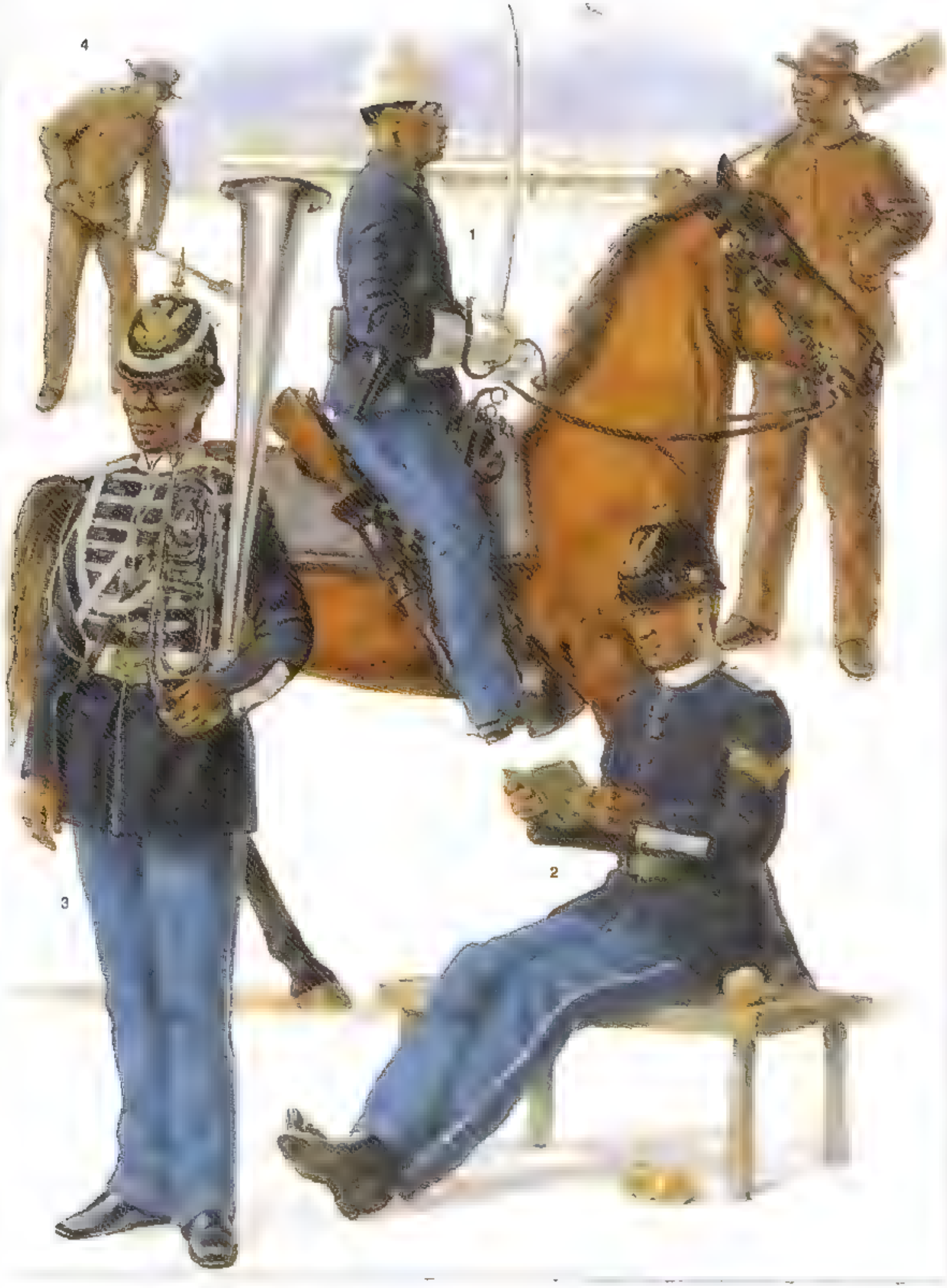
D: On Campaign, 1872–1891

E. Old Fort Tolerosa, 1880



E

F: Garrison Life, 1882–1891



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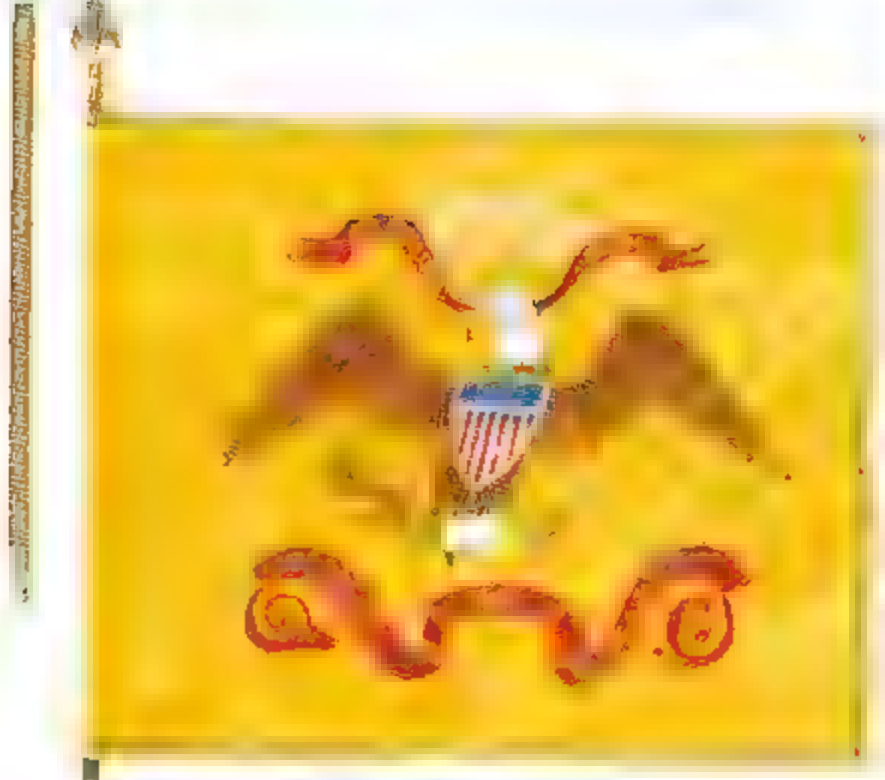

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The Victorio Campaign, 1879–80

One of the most frustrating campaigns for the buffalo soldiers was the 'Victorio War' of 1879–80. War chief of the Warm Springs Apaches, Victorio wished to remain at Ojo Caliente on the fringes of the Black Range, which was the ancestral home of his people. As a consequence, the black troopers became involved in hunting down the renegade and his band. In May 1879, Captain Charles D. Beyer, leading elements of Companies C and I, 9th Cavalry, first picked up the trail of Victorio, who responded by setting the underbrush and woodland afire in an attempt to thwart the soldiers. Beyer persisted and eventually caught up with the Apaches as they were building a breastwork on a rocky peak near the Continental Divide. During the ensuing firefight, Sergeant Thomas Boyne, of Company C, earned a Medal of Honor by rescuing Lieutenant Henry H. Wright, who was cut off when his horse was killed. Wright recalled, 'I was engaged in bringing in a wounded man with a few men and was surprised by the Indians, my horse was killed and corralled by hostiles when Sergeant Thomas Boyne commanded a detachment sent to my assistance, flanked and gallantly charged the Indians driving them off.'

On June 30, and several weeks after his encounter with Beyer, Victorio surrendered at the Mescalero Agency at Fort Stanton. But after refusing to be transported to the hated San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, he escaped on September 3, 1879. The next day he and his band attacked a nearby army camp, killing five black troopers of Company E, 9th Cavalry, and capturing all 50 of the horses belonging to

The regimental band of the 25th Infantry leads a battalion drill on the parade ground at Fort Randall, Dakota Territory, during the mid-1880s. Adorned with white 'mounted' cords, the musicians' helmets are topped with spikes, rather than regulation white plumes. (Bailey, Dix and Mead photo, Western History Department, Denver Public Library)

this unit. As a result, the whole of the 9th and 10th Cavalry was eventually put in the field to either kill or capture the Apache leader. They did neither, although they did much to wear down the resilience of Victorio and his renegade warriors.

Las Animas Canyon, 1879

On September 18, 1879, Navajo scouts attached to a column led by Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley, composed of Companies A and B, 9th Cavalry, picked up the trail of Victorio in the canyons at the head of the Las Animas River. Soon after, these troopers were caught in a three-way hail of bullets fired from the heights of Las Animas Canyon. Hastily dismounting, the troopers took cover behind rocks and boulders, where they remained completely pinned down. The gunfire was heard echoing and re-echoing down the canyon by the men of Companies C and G who were following behind. They rushed to the battle scene, only to be pinned down as well. All four companies eventually withdrew at nightfall, having sustained five troopers and three scouts killed.

Medals of Honor were awarded to three of the men involved in this engagement. After receiving orders to withdraw, Second Lieutenant Matthias W. Day, Company A, noticed two wounded troopers who were about to be left behind. He and Sergeant John Denny ran back under fire and assisted Private Alfred Freeland to safety Lieutenant Day then went back alone to carry off Private Jeremiah Crump, who was more seriously wounded.

Elsewhere, Second Lieutenant Robert T. Emmet, Company G, was involved in a flanking attack on the Apaches when he and five troopers became cut off and surrounded. Realizing that the renegades were making for a position from which they could fire down on the retreating soldiers, Emmet ordered his men to hold their post until those down in the canyon bottom were out of danger. The officer then continued to hold the position while his party recovered its horses, enabling all six men finally to withdraw safely.

Following the failure at Las Animas, Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley was replaced in command of operations in southern New Mexico by Major Albert P. Morrow. On September 29–30, Morrow and detachments from Companies B, C, and G, 9th Cavalry, plus some Apache scouts, fought a running battle with Victorio's band along the Cuchillo Negro River, although the hostiles managed to elude capture. During the next month, the same officer chased Victorio across the border into Mexico, but again failed to capture or kill him, and eventually led his tattered command in to Fort Bayard, near the Mimbres River, where they rested and refitted. The success of Victorio in fending off the buffalo soldiers increased the ranks of his band to about 120 warriors as recruits joined him, especially from the Mescalero Reservation.

ABOVE **Photographed at Winfield, Kansas, in the studio of D. Rodocker, sometime after his regiment was assigned to Kansas and Indian Territory in 1881, Sergeant John Denny, Company B, 9th Cavalry, was awarded the Medal of Honor for helping to rescue a wounded comrade at Las Animas Canyon on September 18, 1879. (Christian Fleetwood Collection, Library of Congress)**

ABOVE **Also photographed by Rodocker at Winfield, Kansas, during the same period, this young trooper of Company B, 9th Cavalry, has 1885-pattern Blunt marksman's buttons attached either side of his collar. (Bob Kotchian collection)**

Hembrillo Canyon, 1880

With the return of Victorio to New Mexico in January 1880, Major Morrow again found himself pitted against an indefatigable foe. On February 23, Colonel Hatch came south and took personal command, ordering more of the 9th Cavalry into the field against the elusive Apache leader. He organized his force into three battalions, commanded by Major Morrow, Captain Ambrose Hooker and Captain Henry Carroll respectively. Acting on advice that Victorio was encamped in Hembrillo Canyon in the San Andrés Mountains, Hatch planned a two-phase operation involving his battalions descending on the renegades from the north, east, and west. Meanwhile, Colonel Grierson received orders from General Sheridan to march from Texas with five companies of the 10th Cavalry. Hatch intended that this entire force should descend on the Mescalero Reservation after wiping out Victorio and his renegades.

Morrow set out from Fort Bayard on March 29 accompanied by Companies H, L, and M, plus a detachment of the 16th Infantry, and a few San Carlos Apache scouts. This column marched to Palomas, where it was joined by reinforcements from Arizona consisting of 85 troopers of the 6th Cavalry, commanded by Captain Curwen B. McClellan, and two companies of Indian scouts. This entire force next moved to Alemán Well on the Jornada del Muerto, near the western slopes of the San Andrés. Captain Carroll

RIGHT **These noncommissioned officers of the 9th Cavalry accompanied the body of Colonel Hatch to Fort Leavenworth for burial in 1889. Sergeant Nathan Fletcher, Company F (top right) was among those involved in the battle with Victorio at Hembrillo Canyon, New Mexico, in April 1880. Sergeant Robert Burley, Company G, (seated, second from right) was among those who rode to the rescue. Chief Trumpeter Stephen Taylor sits at far left. (Courtesy of Special Collections, U.S. Military Academy, West Point)**

advanced westward from Fort Stanton with Companies A, D, F, and G, 9th Cavalry, while Captain Hooker headed south with Companies E, I, and K, 9th Cavalry, plus a small detachment of the 15th Infantry.

Unfortunately, Morrow's progress was delayed by a broken water pipe at Alemán Well, which caused his command to halt until the horses and men were properly watered. When his advanced party, under Captain McClellan, finally reached Hembrillo Canyon on April 8 they heard the sound of gunfire and found Carroll's command pinned down and surrounded. However, realizing they were outnumbered, Victorio and his band melted away into the rocks, leaving eight soldiers wounded, including Captain Carroll.

Old Fort Tularosa, 1880

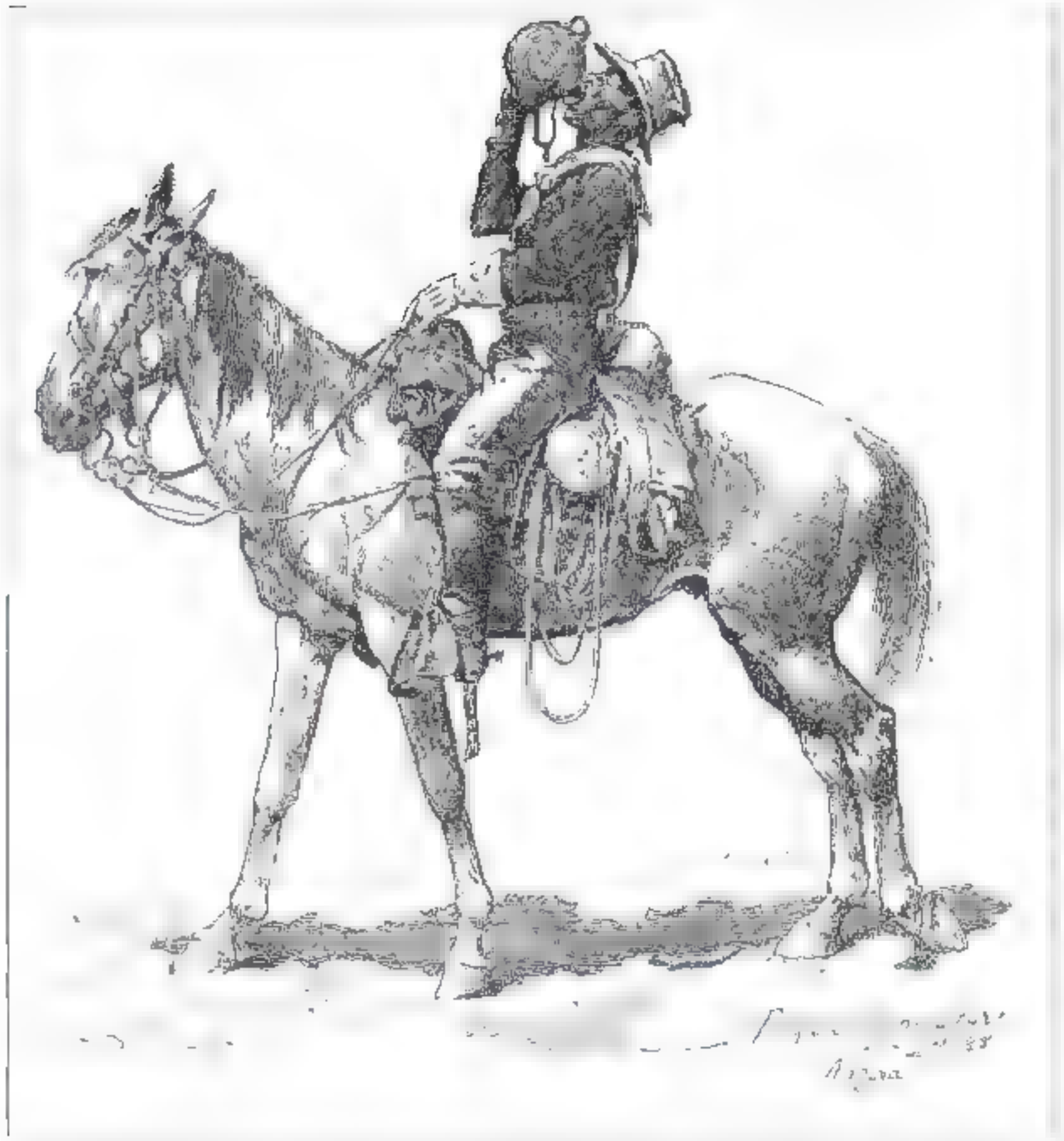
Following his success at Hembrillo Canyon, Victorio moved westward across the Rio Grande into the Mogollon Mountains, killing settlers and miners along the way. Among the latter was James C. Cooney, brother of Captain Michael Cooney, commanding Company A, 9th Cavalry. Captain Cooney was subsequently presented with the sad task of burying his own brother. Meanwhile Colonel Hatch, with Hooker's battalion, pursued Victorio into Arizona, but the Apaches doubled back into New Mexico and headed towards Old Fort Tularosa, which consisted of a small community of squatters settled around an abandoned Indian agency about 50 miles northwest of Ojo Caliente.

Under orders to escort a train of provisions to Old Fort Tularosa and set up a supply base there for the regiment, Sergeant George Jordan, with 25 troopers of Company K, 9th Cavalry, was bedding down for an overnight stop at the Barlow and Sanderson Stage Station on May 13, when a lone rider galloped in yelling that Victorio and his band had been seen near the Old Fort. On foot, as their horses had long since been worn out, Jordan and his detachment marched through the night, arriving at their destination at dawn the next day to find that Victorio had not yet struck. Jordan set his men to work to repair and strengthen the old stockade surrounding the dilapidated agency buildings, inside which the local populace was gathered for safety.

More than 100 Apaches attacked at dusk on May 14, but the buffalo soldiers held their ground and drove the hostiles off. Jordan next dispatched ten of his troopers to prevent the mules and cattle from being stampeded. He later recalled, 'Keeping under cover of the timber, the men quickly made their way to the herders and drove the Indians away, thus saving the men and stock ... After it was all over the townspeople congratulated us for having repulsed ... more than 100 redskins.' Victorio subsequently abandoned his attack and moved south into Mexico. In 1890, Sergeant Jordan received a Medal of Honor for the courage and leadership displayed at Old Fort Tularosa.

Rattlesnake Canyon, 1880

To keep the US Army guessing, Victorio next crossed the border into Texas in July 1880, where he encountered the 10th Cavalry. Learning from the experience of Hatch, Colonel Grierson decided not to attempt a long and fruitless pursuit of the Apaches, but determined to guard the mountain passes and water holes. Discovering that Victorio was headed towards Eagle Springs, Grierson lay in ambush at Tinaja de los Palmos,



Called 'A pull at the canteen,' this engraving is based on a Remington sketch made while the artist was on a 'scout' with the 10th Cavalry in the Sierra Bonitos in 1888. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

the only watering hole along the route, and surprised the Apaches, who nevertheless managed to fight their way out because the buffalo soldiers fired on one another in the dust and confusion of battle!

Grierson continued to monitor the movements of Victorio in his quest for water, and established another ambush in a canyon approaching Rattlesnake Springs on August 6, 1880. Captain Charles Viele was commanding Companies C and G, 10th Cavalry, as they waited for the Apaches to approach. In mid-afternoon their vigil was rewarded as Victorio and his warriors rode towards them, unaware of the ambush. Seconds before the signal to fire was due to be given, Victorio sensed danger and halted his men. The buffalo soldiers opened fire, but the warriors swiftly withdrew out of range. Desperate for water and believing only a few soldiers lay in his path, Victorio attacked but was caught off guard and repulsed when Captain Carpenter, with Companies B and H, was ordered to counter-attack. Meanwhile, a party of Victorio's warriors was beaten off in an attempt to cut off and attack Grierson's supply train, guarded by Company H, 24th Infantry, as it lumbered towards the spring. Victorio's warriors repeatedly charged the buffalo soldiers in an attempt to reach the water. Finally, as night fell, they fled into the Corissa Mountains with the troopers in furious pursuit, but the chase ended without further fighting on that occasion.

Five days later, the buffalo soldiers under Captains Carpenter and Nolan again picked up the trail of Victorio and his warriors. In the heat

of the chase, the horses in Carpenter's company gave out, leaving Nolan's troopers to continue the pursuit. As had happened oft times before, Victorio's warriors crossed the Rio Grande River into Mexico before the U S forces could catch them.

A combined operation involving both American and Mexican forces was finally mounted during September 1880. But on October 9, as these forces converged on Victorio and the remains of his band in the Tres Castillos Mountains, General Joaquin Terrazas informed Colonels Buell and Carr that the presence of American troops on Mexican soil was objectionable, and so they were withdrawn. Victorio was finally caught and killed by elements of the Mexican Army five days later.

Agua Chiquita Canyon, 1880

Despite the death of Victorio, troubles continued with the Apaches and the buffalo soldiers further distinguished themselves in combat. On September 1, 1880, Sergeant James Robinson and a detachment of nine troopers of Company G, 9th Cavalry, were attacked by hostiles while encamped at Agua Chiquita Canyon, New Mexico. Although outnumbered and with two men killed, Robinson ordered a charge and the Indians were driven off.

With most of their animals either dead or wounded, Private Alonzo Drake particularly distinguished himself by volunteering to ride for help on a wounded mule, bare back and alone, traveling 70 miles through hostile country to reach Fort Stanton in 21 hours. Along the way, he asked to borrow a saddle at a settlement near the Peñasco River, and was refused by a white farmer. On October 7, 1880, Sergeant Robinson and his detachment received a commendation from Colonel Hatch for their gallantry.

Carrizo Canyon, 1881

Several other members of the 9th Cavalry earned the coveted Medal of Honor during the continuation of the Indian campaign in 1881. On August 12, Sergeant Thomas Shaw was part of a detachment of Company K in pursuit of a small renegade band led by Nana, one of Victorio's lieutenants. These Apaches had attacked a number of small settlements and ranches in southern New Mexico Territory. The outnumbered soldiers surprised the hostiles in Carrizo Canyon on the west side of the Mimbres Mountains. Sergeant Shaw was awarded the Medal of Honor for 'extraordinary courage under fire' in preventing the Apaches from surrounding his command.

Four days later, during a fire fight in the foothills of the Cuchillo Negro Mountains, Lieutenant George Burnett saved the life of an unhorsed trooper under fire. In the same action, Sergeant Moses Williams and Private Augustus Walley, of Company I, rescued three troopers in a similar predicament. On 19 August, Sergeant Brent Woods, Company B, also saved the lives of several of his comrades, plus some civilians. All four men received the ultimate award for bravery

The Geronimo Campaign, 1885–86

In the spring of 1885 the 10th Cavalry moved from Texas to the Department of Arizona, where they were needed in the campaign against Geronimo and his Chiricahua Apaches. When the column took

RIGHT **Photographed by assistant surgeon Edgar A. Mearns, a troop of the 10th Cavalry line up on the parade ground at Fort Verde in Arizona, circa 1886. These men would have been involved in the campaign against Geronimo. (Library of Congress – USZ62-76430)**

RIGHT **Corporal Edward Scott, Company K, 10th Cavalry, nine months after the amputation of his right thigh following his wounding and rescue at the Sierra PiXito in Mexico. (Courtesy Armed Forces Institute of Pathology)**

up its march from Fort Davis and followed the route of the Southern Pacific Railroad, it comprised 11 troops plus the regimental band. At Camp Rice it was joined by Company I, and from that point to Bowie Station, Arizona, the whole regiment progressed together for the first time in its history. Headquarters was established at Whipple Barracks, while the remainder of the regiment was posted at Forts Apache, Verde, Thomas, and Grant.

The greater part of the 10th Cavalry was in the field during the whole of the Geronimo campaign of 1885–86, although the duty performed involved a dismal succession of inglorious days guarding water holes and mountain passes.

Piñito Mountains, 1886

One exception occurred in May 1886, when Company K, under Captain Thomas C. Lebo, pursued Geronimo's band in to the Santa Cruz Valley after an Indian attack on a nearby ranch. Following a 200-mile chase, the buffalo soldiers brought their quarry to bay on the rocky slopes of the Sierra Piñito in Mexico, about 30 miles south of the border. As veterans of the Victorio campaign, the black troopers held firm as they met with a wall of lead. Dismounting, they took cover, but one man was killed, while Corporal Edward Scott was severely wounded in both legs and lay exposed to enemy fire. Ignoring the hail of bullets, Lieutenant Powhattan Clarke rose from cover, made his way to his stricken comrade and carried him to safety. Lieutenant Clarke recalled, "I had some close calls while I was trying to pull the corporal from under fire and succeeded in getting him behind a bush and you can be sure it was a

Entitled 'The brave conduct of Lieutenant Clark, of the Tenth (colored) Cavalry, in rescuing, under fire, the wounded Corporal Scott,' this engraving appeared on the front page of *Harper's Weekly* on August 21, 1886. According to Clark, Scott rode 40 miles 'without a groan' following this action, stating that he had seen 'forty men in one fight in a worse fix than he was.' (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

very new sensation to hear bullets whiz and strike within six inches of me and not be able to see anything.'

Shortly after this, the enemy fire slackened and then ceased, as Geronimo escaped once more into the mountains. Lieutenant Clarke was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery on May 3, 1886. In a letter to his mother, he stated, 'Our troop has been highly complimented and the Captain is the hero of the hour. Do not tell me about the colored troops [,] there is not a troop in the U.S. Army that I would trust my life to as quickly as this K troop of ours.'

After the surrender of Geronimo in August of the same year, a last remnant of his Apache band under Mangus continued to defy the Government of the United States. On September 18, Captain Charles L. Cooper, commanding Troop H, 10th Cavalry, picked up the trail of Mangus in the White Mountains and pursued him over 40 miles of rough and rocky country. After a running fight, the Indians were cornered in the Black River Mountains and forced to surrender.

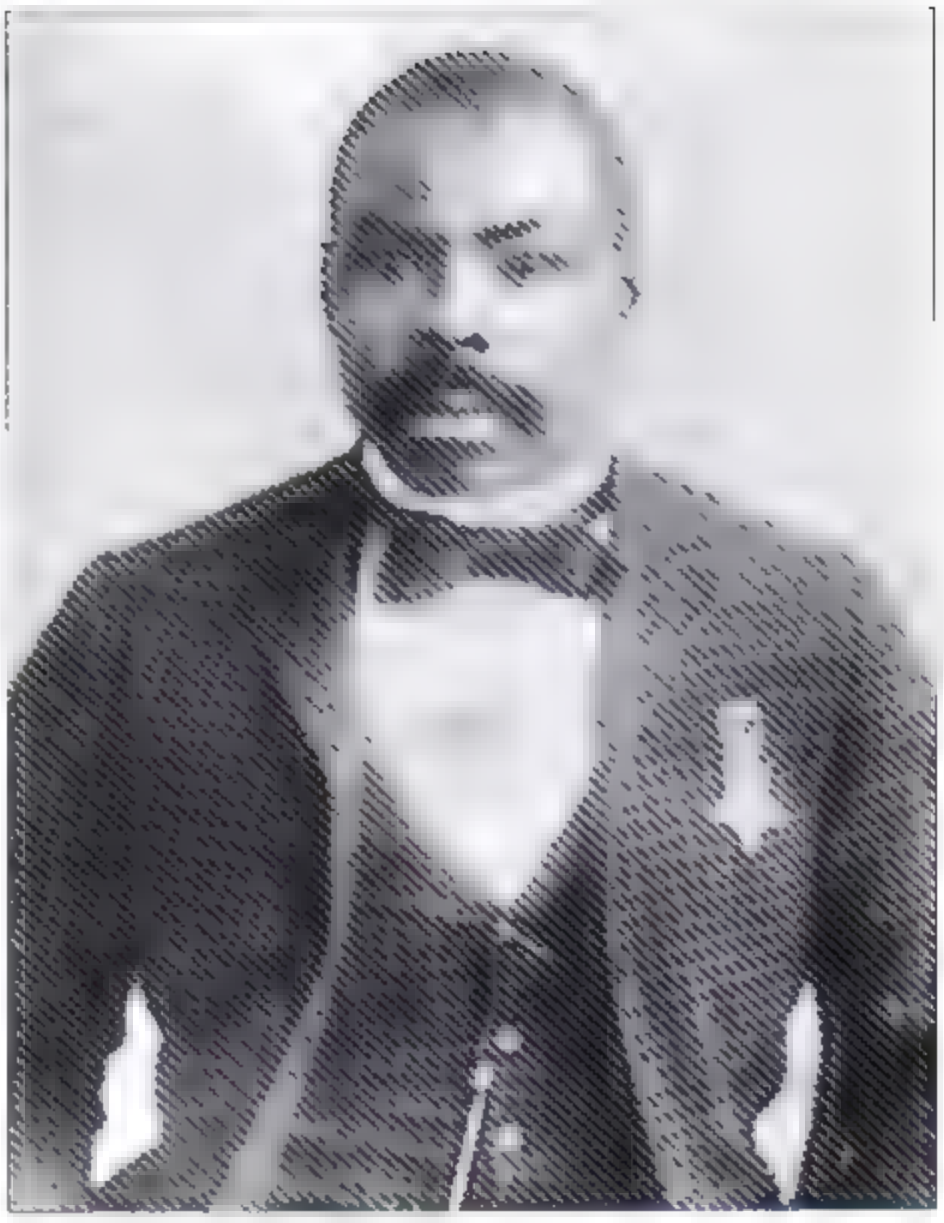
The 10th Cavalry and 24th Infantry continued to serve in Arizona throughout the remainder of the 1880s. In 1887, elements of both regiments were involved in the hunt for 'The Apache Kid,' a former Indian scout who went on the run following the murder of a fellow scout at the San Carlos Reservation. Despite a $5,000 reward for his recapture dead or alive, 'The Kid' was never caught.

Ambush near Cedar Springs, 1889

A regular duty for the buffalo soldiers involved guarding the army payroll as it was carried from post to post for distribution. In May 1889, paymaster Major Joseph W. Wham was under escort provided by eight enlisted men of the 24th Infantry and two troopers of the 10th Cavalry, when the party was ambushed on the trail between Fort Grant and Fort Thomas, near Cedar Springs Station, Arizona. A gang of outlaws placed a boulder in a narrow gorge through which the trail passed, and waited in the bluffs above. The soldiers were advancing towards the boulder blocking the road, when a signal shot was fired from the ledge of rocks about fifty feet above to the right. A fire fight ensued for about 30 minutes, during which eight of the enlisted men were wounded, two being shot twice. Succeeding in stealing $29,000, the bandits escaped into the mountains.

According to Paymaster Wham, 'Sergeant [Benjamin] Brown, though shot through the abdomen, did not quit the field until again

wounded, this time through the arm. Private [Benjamin] Burge who was to my immediate right, received a bad wound in the hand, but gallantly held his post, resting his rifle on his forearm and continuing to fire with much coolness until shot through the thigh and twice through the hat. Private [George] Arrington was shot through the shoulder while fighting from the same position. Private [Thornton] Hams, [James] Wheeler, and [Julius] Harrison were also wounded to my immediate left, while bravely doing their duty under a murderous cross fire. Private [Squire] Williams was shot through the leg near my ambulance at the first volley, but crawling behind cover continued the fire. Private [Hamilton] Lewis, my ambulance driver, was shot through the stomach, but the noble fellow was undaunted, and while the blood gushed from his terrible wound, he insisted that my clerk, W. F. Gibbon, should allow him to take the wounded Wheeler's gun ... and buckling on the belt heroically continued to fight until all present were wounded except myself and Corporal [Isaiah] Mays.' The latter soldier managed to walk and crawl about two miles to the Cottonwood Ranch and gave the alarm. Troops were called out from all the surrounding posts, plus a company of Apache scouts and a posse under US Marshall W. K. Meade. A local black woman who observed the attack was able to identify several of the bandits, including 'Cyclone Bill,' who were subsequently arrested and jailed. Sergeant Brown and Corporal Mays were both recommended for the Medal of Honor, which they received the following year.



Corporal Isaiah Mays, Company B, 24th Infantry, was one of two men awarded the Medal of Honor for attempting to save the payroll at Cedar Springs in 1899. (Library of Congress)

Major Wham concluded his report of the attack by stating, 'I was a soldier in [General] Grant's old regiment [21st Illinois], and during the entire Civil War it was justly proud of its record of sixteen battles ... but I never witnessed better courage or better fighting than shown by these colored soldiers, on May 11, 1889.'

DAKOTA TERRITORY, 1880–91

Following 10 years of arduous service in Texas, during which time it garrisoned posts and sub-posts, guarded mails and public property, constructed over 1,000 miles of wagon roads and 300 miles of telegraph lines, and efficiently scouted a vast region of hostile mountains and plains, the 25th Infantry was transferred to Dakota Territory during the summer of 1880.

A local newspaper correspondent at Yankton described the scene when five companies of the regiment arrived via railroad and transferred to a riverboat: 'The lines were cast off, and amid the cheers of the occupants of the boat which were answered by the crowd on the

shore, and the fine music of the regimental band, the Peninah steamed up the river, and the hundreds of spectators who had assembled on the banks of the river to witness the novelty of a regiment of colored troops, returned to town. The men of this regiment, during their short stay at Yankton, acted with the utmost decorum. There was no straggling or running up town after whisky, and there wasn't a drunken man among them. When the boat was loaded, it was not necessary to send out guards to hunt up stragglers. Every man was on hand and at the word of command marched aboard the boat. In regard to discipline and good conduct the colored troops have made a favorable impression.'

Colonel George Andrews, with headquarters, the regimental band, and Companies B, F, G, and I, took up station at Fort Randall; Lieutenant-Colonel M. M. Blunt and Companies C and E at Fort Hale; and Companies A, D, H, and K at Fort Meade.

In June 1881, the 9th Cavalry was moved from New Mexico to Kansas and Indian Territory, where it remained until 1885. Most of these years were spent in garrison, although in 1884–85 elements of the regiment, plus a company of the 24th Infantry, became involved in policing and driving out illegal squatters, or 'Boomers,' who had established themselves in Oklahoma Territory, which was not open for settlement at that time.

In the summer of 1885 the 9th Cavalry was moved to the Department of the Platte, where it enjoyed a well-earned rest after the many scouts and campaigns of the preceding 18 years. Once again, the regiment mainly performed garrison duty until the Sioux

BELOW **A *Harper's Weekly* engraving entitled 'Ejecting an Oklahoma Boomer.' Following their transfer to Kansas in 1881, one of the duties of the 9th Cavalry was escorting 'Boomers,' or squatters, off Oklahoma Territory. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)**

LEFT **Some of the men of Company B, 25th Infantry, pose for the camera at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, in 1883. Kneeling at left is the musician, who is distinguished by the white herringbone braid across his chest. (US Army Signal Corps photo SC 83637)**

uprising of 1890–91, during which it was the first in the field in November 1890, and the last to leave late in the following March after spending a severe winter under canvas.

Wounded Knee, 1890–91

The Ghost Dance religion which spread throughout the western Plains tribes during the summer of 1890 led to nearly one fourth of the entire US Army being concentrated on or near the Indian reservations in northwestern Nebraska and southeastern Dakota. Stationed at Fort Robinson, Troops F, I, and K, 9th Cavalry, reached Pine Ridge by November 20, while Companies A and G were among the troops to reach the Rosebud agency on the same day. Company D arrived at the latter location five days later. Other units involved at Pine Ridge included the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 8th Cavalry, plus supporting foot soldiers including the 25th Infantry.

On December 18, 1890, a member of the 8th Infantry at the Rosebud observed, 'Our cavalry has for soldiers negroes, and it is said that the two troops here are the best two of 'buffalo soldiers' in the service. Captains Cusack and Garrard take much pride in keeping these fellows up to the mark. They are good riders, are cheerful in the performance of their duty, and are good rifle shots.'

Frightened by such a large military presence, the Indians panicked and left the reservations in droves. Matters went from bad to worse when Sitting Bull, spiritual leader of the Native Americans during the Little Bighorn campaign, was killed as the Indian police attempted to arrest him as a ringleader of the Ghost Dancers. Nonetheless, the soldiers managed to push most of them back on to the reservations, leaving only a small number of fanatics to be rounded up.

BELOW **Snow envelopes the camp of the 9th Cavalry at the Pine Ridge Agency in 1891. The blizzards came in February while the buffalo soldiers continued to police the reservations in the wake of Wounded Knee. Most of the men are wearing muskrat caps, while the officers at center wear muskrat mittens. Three of the horses are protected from the elements by a version of the 1885-pattern horse cover. (Denver Public Library: Western History Department)**

Corporal William O. Wilson, Troop I, 9th Cavalry, was awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery at Pine Ridge in 1890. Inexplicably, he has a 25th Infantry cap insignia pinned above his yellow chevrons. (Courtesy of Don Brown)

During the same month, four companies of the 9th Cavalry, under Major Guy Henry, plus two Hotchkiss guns under Lieutenant J. L. Heyden, 1st Artillery, were assigned to scout the Badlands in search of Big Foot and his band, which was known to contain some of Sitting Bull's followers. Private Charles Creek recollected later, 'You late [sic] out in the cold like a dog, not in a tent because the Indians gonna sneak up on you. It was so cold the spit froze when it left your mouth.'

Henry's troopers were still out scouting on December 29 when a courier brought news of the slaughter of Big Foot's band at Wounded Knee Creek. In the face of a possible wide-scale Indian revolt, every soldier was needed at the reservations, and Henry arrived back at Pine Ridge with three of his companies at dawn the next day, having traveled 100 miles in about 24 hours. No sooner had his exhausted men unsaddled than word arrived that his train, still approaching the reservation with Company I as escort, was under attack. The Indian Scouts with Henry's command refused to ride for help because their horses were 'played out,' and Corporal William O. Wilson, Troop I, 9th Cavalry, had volunteered to complete the dangerous mission, for which he later received a Medal of Honor. With the loss of one buffalo soldier killed, Henry's battalion beat off the Indians, who were led by Chief Two-Strike, and the wagons were brought safely in.

Drexel Mission, 1890

On December 30, 1890, the troops responsible for the massacre at Wounded Knee, consisting of eight companies of the 7th Cavalry commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel James W. Forsyth, responded to reports that Drexel mission at White Clay Creek, about four miles from Pine Ridge, was under attack. Owing to a failure to post flank guards, Forsyth rode straight into an ambush, and found himself surrounded and pinned down by about 400 Indians led by Little Wound and Two-Strike.

Hearing the gunfire, Major Henry mounted up his exhausted buffalo soldiers and again led them into action. Reaching the entrance to the valley in which Forsyth was trapped, he deployed Captain Henry Wright, with Troops I and K, towards the east slope, while Captain John S. Loud and Troops D and F scaled the west slope. After some bitter fighting, the Indians were driven off and the men of the 7th Cavalry were rescued.

This corporal of the 9th Cavalry was photographed at Pine Ridge in 1890. Proud of his .45-caliber Colt revolver, he has slid it around to the left side of his belt. He wears a non-regulation blanket on his pommel, underneath which is a horse cover. His wide-brimmed hat also appears to have been a private purchase. (Western History Department, Denver Public Library)

UNIFORMS

Between 1866 and 1872, the peacetime US Army continued to wear the uniform prescribed in 1861. As a result, the African-American infantry regiments were often photographed wearing 1851-pattern frock coats complete with brass shoulder scales, 1858-pattern forage caps, and white dress gloves! Frock coats were sometimes replaced by four-button sack coats when on campaign, although some men modified the former garment by shortening the tails and altering the stand-up collar into the 'falling' type.

As with all US Army units at this time, not all the uniforms originally issued to the black foot soldiers were acceptable. A Board of Survey was appointed to meet at the camp of the 39th Infantry, at Greenville, Louisiana, on January 5, 1867, to 'investigate and report upon the condition of certain articles of clothing, camp and garrison equipage,' received by Brevet Captain Charles H. Roberts, Acting Regimental Quartermaster, from Captain W. G. Hodge, Military Storekeeper, which were 'alleged to be damaged.'

At least one of the black infantry regiments may have been differently attired. In 1872, Cathay Williams, the woman who managed to enlist in the 38th Infantry, recalled, 'The regiment I joined wore the Zouave uniform.' This indicates that one of the black foot regiments was possibly issued with surplus Civil War zouave clothing when first organized.

Mounted troops were no better off. According to a letter published in the *Army & Navy Journal* in October 1869, the clothing issued to the cavalry was of 'so inferior a quality as to be intrinsically valueless. A month's wear necessitates a new outfit, if the soldier is to keep himself clean, as a soldier should. Even the very color of the clothing is not uniform. The pants in particular, have all the shades of which 'blue' is susceptible.' The standard cavalry uniform for full dress consisted of the yellow-trimmed, 1854-pattern, uniform jacket, the 1858-pattern cap, and sky blue kersey trousers with saddle-piece reinforcement. When on campaign the jacket was replaced by the 1858-pattern, four-button, sack coat

Distribution of what is known as the 1872-pattern uniform was begun on July 1, 1873, and provided the buffalo soldiers, along with the rest of the US Army, with long awaited new clothing. The issuance of old pattern clothing was officially stopped on December 19, 1879, and the Quartermaster General's annual report the following year stated, 'The stock of old army clothing left over at the close of the [civil] war has at length disappeared.' The new cavalry uniform consisted of a Prussian-style, black cloth-covered helmet complete with brass fittings, yellow horsehair plume, and yellow worsted bands and cords. The short-skirted jacket, or *basque*, was piped and faced with yellow branch service trim. For full dress, the infantry received a jacket trimmed and piped with sky blue and a blue cloth cap trimmed with the same color, topped with a white pompon.

For campaign wear in 1872, all troops were prescribed a pleated blouse trimmed with branch service color, which was particularly unpopular. Headgear consisted of a low-crowned, chasseur-pattern forage cap, with insignia fastened to the front. The cavalry were also provided with a black, folding brimmed hat, which proved as unpopular

OPPOSITE LEFT **Taken some time in the late 1860s or early 1870s, this tintype shows an unidentified trooper of Company M, 10th Cavalry, wearing an 1858-pattern forage cap with brass company letter and non-regulation regimental numbers, with crossed sabers added below. His trousers clearly show the reinforcement of the saddling piece. His waistband is fastened by two small buttons, while further buttons were attached either side for suspenders or braces. His shirt was probably a private purchase, and he appears to be wearing ankle or half boots under his trousers. (Herb Peck, Jr. collection)**

OPPOS TE RIGHT **This infantry sergeant wears service chevrons on his lower sleeves and has 1880-pattern, $^3/_4$-inch sterling silver, 'Laidley' marksman's buttons on his collar. His belt and belt plate are part of the Model 1874 Palmer Brace system, minus the braces, which were abandoned after several years of field trials. (Herb Peck, Jr. collection)**

LEFT **These two unidentified members of the 24th Infantry display examples of the surplus uniforms issued to the US Army after the Civil War. The first sergeant wears an 1851-pattern frock coat with the skirts removed, while the enlisted man at right has left his coat intact. His vest is non-regulation. (The Institute of Texan Cultures at UTSA No. 68-1009a&b)**

as the pleated blouse. The latter item was replaced in 1874 by a plain, five-button blouse with cord trim in branch service color on collar and cuffs. In 1884, a plain blouse with three outside pockets was issued.

Regulations notwithstanding, due to intermittent supply and a need to use up old-pattern clothing meant that a cavalry unit on campaign looked far from uniform in appearance – and the buffalo soldiers were no exception. A few days after riding to reinforce the besieged command at Milk Creek in October 1879, Company D, 9th Cavalry, was described thus: 'Every shape of jacket, trousers, boot, and hat, of modern creation seemed represented in this troop, and under every dilapidated hat brim there was the honest, beaming darky visage, which the American is accustomed to associate with the brighter side of slavery life, rather than the dashing bravery which signalized the rescue on Milk River.'

As a result of General Order 107 issued in 1872, US Army bands were required to wear the uniform of their regiment, but were permitted to adopt 'such ornaments as they deem proper.' In November 1879, the band of the 10th Cavalry ordered from military outfitters Baker & McKinney, of Grand Street, New York, a full dress uniform consisting of 'the new [1872-pattern] regulation blue tunic, handsomely trimmed in yellow, black busby, with yellow feather on the side, baldrick and music box of yellow enameled leather, [and] gilt shoulder knots.' The inclusion of the busby for musicians in 1872 suggests a much earlier date of introduction of this item to the US Army than was previously supposed.

ABOVE LEFT **Private Carter Huse, 25th Infantry, wears an 1884-pattern coat with white trim and facings, with the 1881-pattern dress helmet. The dark blue-backed service chevrons on his lower sleeves indicate that he had completed three five-year terms of peacetime enlistment. Above these is a white-backed service in war or campaign chevron. (State Historical Society of North Dakota)**

ABOVE RIGHT **Never officially adopted, buffalo coats first appear to have been worn by the US Army in 1869. This unidentified member of the 25th Infantry was photographed in South Dakota, sometime after his regiment was transferred there in 1880. (Herb Peck, Jr. collection)**

In 1881, the infantry received new dress headgear consisting of a Prussian-style, black cloth-covered helmet with brass spike and fittings. The facing color of infantry was changed from sky blue to white in 1884. The 25th Infantry were issued with this new uniform following their transfer to Dakota Territory. An inspection report dated October 1, 1886, stated their 'arms, belts and boxes, and the clothing (military dress) to be in excellent order.'

Like most other army units, the buffalo soldiers were poorly supplied with winter clothing. Following the Red River War in the Texas Panhandle in 1874, John F. Casey, Company H, 10th Cavalry, stated, 'It rained and snowed continually all day and night and we had no overcoats, only our ponchos.' This is a reference to the rubber poncho issued to mounted troops. Company C, 10th Cavalry, under Lieutenant William Beck, was operating over the border near Mount Carmel, in Mexico, towards the end of November 1877 in bitterly cold weather 'without great coats.'

Although never officially adopted, buffalo skin coats were first purchased from commercial sources by the US Army in 1869. According to Sergeant Jacob Wilks, the troopers of the 9th Cavalry, after capturing the main Indian encampment at Tule Canyon on the Staked Plains during 1874, 'found a vast amount of buffalo robes, of which each man made choice of the best.'

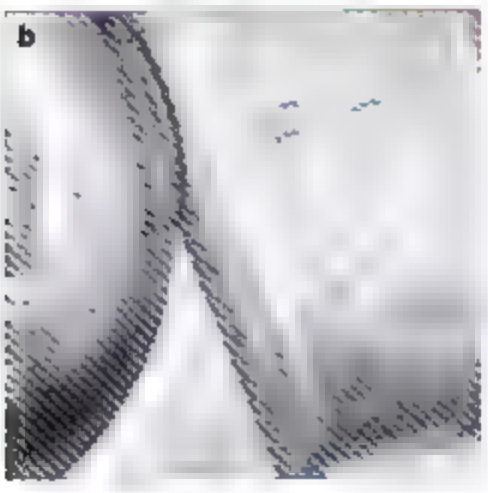
ARMS & EQUIPAGE

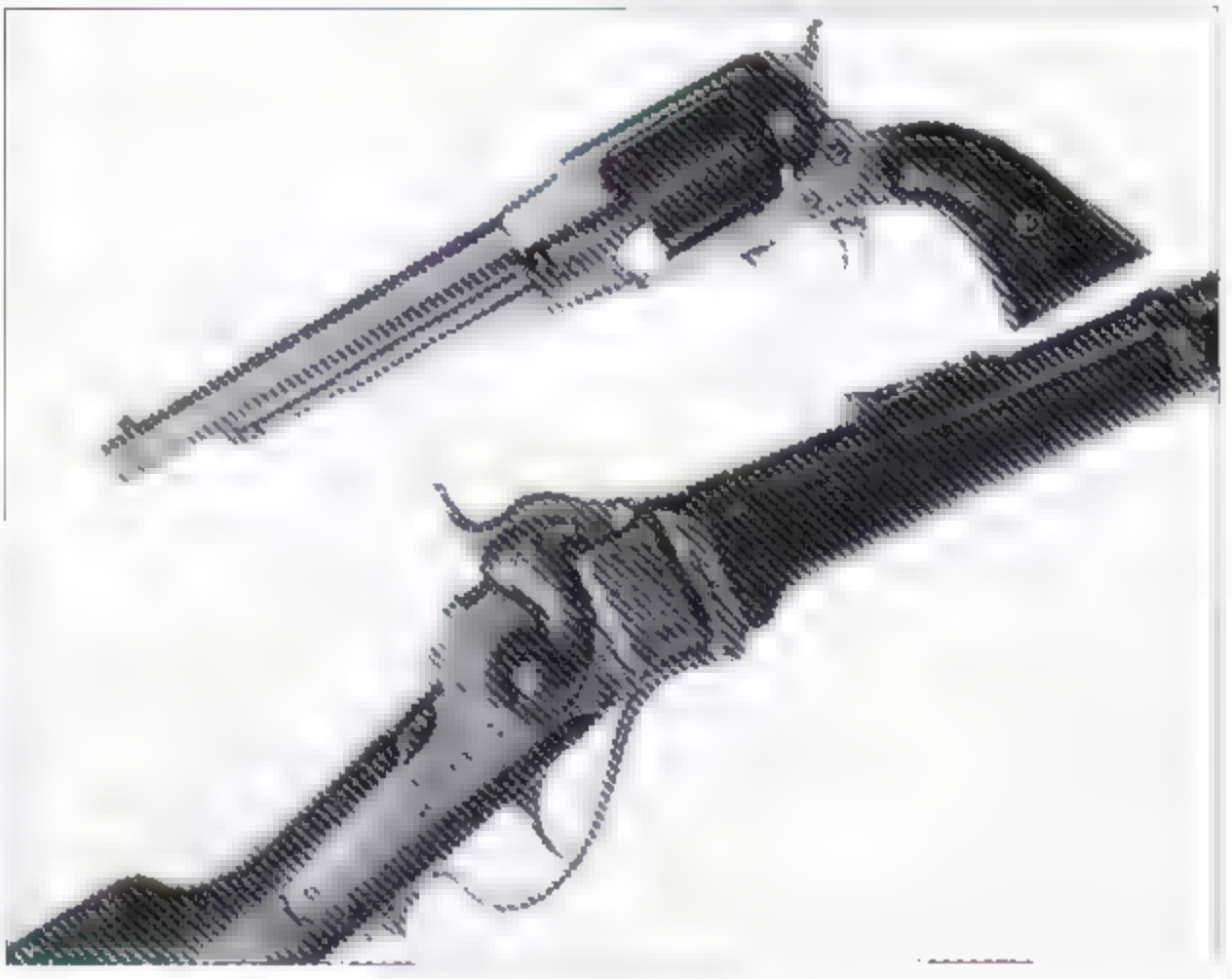
Upon formation, the two black cavalry regiments were armed with Model 1860, .52-caliber, seven-shot Spencer carbines. The weapon of choice during the Civil War, it was capable of firing seven rimfire cartridges from its magazine in less than 30 seconds. This weapon was gradually replaced with the newer Model 1865, .50-caliber Spencer, with Stabler magazine cutoff device, which permitted manual reloading with a single cartridge while keeping the full magazine in reserve for emergencies. However, not all the buffalo soldiers received this improved weapon. During November 1869, the Spencers carried by Company G, 10th Cavalry, were condemned and the ordnance officer at the Leavenworth Arsenal was ordered to transfer to the commanding officer of that troop, then at Fort Dodge, Kansas, 'seventy Sharpe's [sic] improved carbines,' which were single-shot weapons. By September 1871, the 10th Cavalry had 845 Sharps carbines on its inventory.

In need of an army-wide shoulder arm, the US military conducted cavalry trials during the period from 1871 to 1872 with four different types of Model 1870 carbine – the Remington, the Sharps, the Ward-Burton, and the Springfield. Popularly known as the 'Allin Conversion' or 'Trapdoor' Springfield, the latter weapon was loaded at the breech by means of a mechanism designed by Erskine S. Allin, Master Armorer of the Springfield Armory. This consisted of a rising breech block hinged at the front, which was unlatched by a thumb piece to receive a copper-case cartridge.

In August 1871, Company L of the 9th Cavalry was issued with 27 each of these trial weapons, with orders to 'give them a thorough trial, and promptly render monthly reports, on their merits, to the Chief of Ordnance, through the chief ordnance officer of the department.' Finally, on May 20, 1873, the Springfield carbine was adopted as the

Although against army regulations to bear regimental markings on firearms, both of these weapons have 'Company K, 9 CAV' stamped on them, which indicates they were carried by the buffalo soldiers. (detail a) Remington New Model Army revolver. (detail b) Model 1867 Sharps carbine. (Private collection)





The black infantry regiments were armed with the breech-loading Springfield 'Trapdoor' rifle by 1873. A detail showing the rising breech-block loading mechanism which gave the weapon its 'Trapdoor' nick-name. (Courtesy of the Ministry of Defence Pattern Room)

standard shoulder arm for the US cavalry and would remain as such for the next 23 years. The 10th Cavalry was the first regiment to be completely rearmed with this weapon, which was issued during the first half of 1874. The 9th Cavalry received their Springfields during the second half of the same year

Regarding side arms issued in 1866–67, the black cavalrymen carried either the M1860 Colt .44 army revolver or the less popular Remington, .44 New Model army revolver, both of which were percussion. These were finally replaced, in 1874, by the breech-loading M1873, .45 Colt Cavalry revolver, although elements of both cavalry regiments were also the first to trial the Smith and Wesson Model No. 3 revolver during 1875. Use of the latter weapon was much encouraged by Major George W. Schofield, 10th Cavalry, who was the brother of General John W. Schofield, who headed the army board responsible for rearming the army during the early 1870s

The four black infantry regiments were originally armed with the three-band, Model 1866, .50-caliber 'Trapdoor' Springfield rifle. About 25,000 muzzle-loading Springfields were converted to the 'Allin' system after the Civil War. Following trials in 1872, the .45-caliber Model 1873 Springfield rifle was adopted and issued. This weapon was carried throughout the remaining years of the Indian Wars and underwent numerous minor changes culminating in the Model 1888 Springfield, which incorporated a unique bayonet that also served as a cleaning rod. The latter innovation was necessitated by financial and production considerations. A new smokeless repeating rifle was being considered for adoption by the US Army and, with the supply of Civil War bayonets exhausted, the M1888 'Trapdoor' with its combined bayonet and cleaning rod provided an economically viable substitute.

The buffalo soldiers did not immediately receive these improved arms. According to Private William Branch, his company of the 25th Infantry was carrying unconverted Civil War surplus arms as late as 1874.

Experimental equipment was being trialed by all the black regiments throughout the Indian Wars. Photographed in 1892, this squad of Company F, 24th Infantry, at Fort Bayard, New Mexico, carry the Sherlock blanket roll equipment. They also wear 1890-pattern canvas infantry leggings, and carry Model 1873 Springfield rifles. The man second from left has knocked his 1889-pattern campaign hat into a non-regulation 'Montana peak.' (National Archives and Records Administration)

Remembering the action at Anadarko, Indian Territory in that year, he recalled, 'We got de ole fashion muzzle loaders. You puts one ball in de muzzle and shove de powder down wid de ramrod.'

Regarding accoutrements, both the cavalry and the infantry were issued with surplus Civil War equipment upon organization. For the cavalry, this probably consisted of waist belts of black harness leather, minus shoulder strap, with eagle buckle; Blakeslee cartridge boxes slung suspended from shoulder straps; and saber scabbards secured to the waist belt via a Stuart saber attachment. A black leather percussion pouch was possibly also attached to the waist belt for pistol ammunition. Canteens with grey wool covers were suspended from white cotton slings. Saddles were of the McClellan model of 1859.

The infantry probably wore black leather waist belts, fastened by a stamped brass 'US' oval plate. Slung from this would have been the experimental M1866 cartridge box for either 19 or 20 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. A M1855 bayonet and scabbard would also have been attached to the belt, plus a percussion pouch containing extra rounds.

By 1873, most of the original Civil War surplus accoutrements and saddles issued to the 9th and 10th Cavalry were wearing out. Indeed, Company A of the latter unit was using 30 condemned saddles. From 1873 to 1875, various companies of both black cavalry regiments, along with their fellow white units, received variations of an experimental Model 1872 brace accoutrement system, with orders to give it 'a thorough trial.' Similar to the brace system used by the British Army at that time, the basic pattern developed for US horse soldiers consisted of a black leather waist belt with shoulder braces, to which was attached the Dyer carbine pouch, pistol cartridge pouch, swivel pistol holster, and saber. The supporting braces held a carbine sling attachment at front

Seen here taking lunch at St. Mary's, Montana, in 1894, these members of the 10th Cavalry served as an escort for General Wesley Merritt, commander of the Department of Dakota. They wear a mixture of 1884-pattern blouses, 1883-pattern overshirts, and 1889-pattern drab campaign hats. As woven cartridge belts were not designed to carry revolver ammunition, at least three of these men have improvised by attaching cap pouches to the lower ends of the holsters holding their Remington New Model Army revolvers. (Montana Historical Society, Helena)

and rear. The 24th and 25th Infantry were among the foot soldiers to receive infantry versions of this equipment during the same period, combining 'the knapsack, haversack, canteen, cartridge-box, waist-belt, and the bayonet-scabbard' into one system. Neither system proved popular, although the belts continued to be worn without the braces.

Equally unpopular was the Palmer infantry brace system with McKeever cartridge boxes, designed by Lieutenant George Palmer, 16th Infantry. Issued for experimental purposes in 1874, these were found to be cumbersome in the field and were seldom used, becoming obsolete by 1878.

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THE PLATES

A: SCOUTING NEAR THE PECOS RIVER, 1870

During January 1870, Captain Francis Dodge, commanding Company D, 9th Cavalry, and Company K, 24th Infantry, discovered a Mescalero Apache village near the Pecos River in Texas. Despite being detected, Captain Dodge ordered his men to attack and they surged so quickly on to the mesa top that the Indians were forced to leave their dead behind as they made their escape. Typical of the period, the buffalo soldiers still wear Civil War surplus clothing. The mounted corporal (**A1**) wears an 1854-pattern, 12-button uniform jacket with most of the trim removed. Headgear consists of an 1858-pattern forage cap with stamped brass insignia. His colored neckerchief is non-regulation but offers protection against the elements. He holds a Model 1860 Light Cavalry saber and has a Model 1865, .50-caliber Spencer carbine attached to a carbine sling. A Model 1860, 44-caliber Colt revolver is carried in an 1863-pattern 'universal' holster attached to his waist belt. A Blakeslee cartridge box is slung over his right shoulder. The infantrymen (**A2** & **A3**) carry the Model 1866, .50-caliber Springfield rifle musket, popularly known as the 'Allin Conversion,' or 'Trapdoor' Springfield. The figure at right wears an 1858-pattern, four-button, sack coat and non-regulation brimmed hat. The soldier at left is stripped down to a non-regulation flannel undershirt. Both men wear brogan style Jefferson boots. Their equipment includes the experimental M1866 cartridge boxes, while their percussion pouches are used to carry extra rounds.

B: GARRISON LIFE, 1873–1880

This parade ground scene depicts the uniforms adopted as part of the new uniform regulations for the US Army prescribed during the period 1873–80. The 10th Cavalry trumpeter (**B1**) is distinguished by the herringbone pattern trim on the chest of his yellow-faced basque, or short-skirted jacket. The regimental numerals were worn on the collar until 1884. His

The noncommissioned officers of Troop A, 10th Cavalry, pose for the camera at Fort Apache, circa 1890. The First Sergeant third from right has a sharpshooter's device pinned to his 1884-pattern blouse. (The Institute of Texan Cultures at UTSA No. 75-299)

Inscribed 'A halt to tighten the packs,' this Remington engraving depicts troopers of the 10th Cavalry in Arizona Territory during 1888. (Anne S. K. Brown Military collection, Brown University Library)

Prussian-style, 'duck-billed,' cloth-covered helmet is bound with patent leather. The worsted cords were either attached to the left side of the helmet, or could be cut and replaced by a separate tassel. This enabled the helmet to be removed more easily. The one-inch seam stripes on his reinforced trousers indicate that he was also a bandsman. Attached to his waist belt is a Model 1858 Light Cavalry saber. His Model 1859 McClellan saddle is modified with Model 1872 equipment. The sergeant's (**B2**) arms and equipment consist of a black buff leather waist belt with 1872-pattern Dyer pouch attached to the back; leather saber straps secured through two brass slings to his waist belt; and a black buff leather carbine sling to which is attached a Model 1872 Springfield carbine. The enlisted man of the 24th Infantry (**B3**) wears the sky blue faced coat. His plain 'sky blue' kersey trousers are a deeper color than those worn during the Civil War period. His dark blue cloth 1872-pattern cap is also piped sky blue trim, and has a white pompon mounted in yellow metal ball and socket device. An eagle device and 1872 pattern stamped sheet brass bugle horn, with company letter inset, also indicates his branch of service. He carries a Model 1870, .50-caliber Springfield rifle musket and wears the belt designed for the experimental 1872-pattern brace yoke system, with redundant brass loops either side of the belt plate. The enlisted man of the 25th Infantry (**B4**) wears an 1874-pattern, five-button blouse and 1872-pattern

B1

forage cap with 1875-pattern crossed rifles insignia. He holds a Model 1873 Springfield rifle with fixed bayonet. His equipment consists of the 1874-pattern Palmer brace system with Type II McKeever cartridge boxes.

C: SKIRMISH AT ELK CREEK, 1874

On October 24, 1874, three companies of the 10th Cavalry, under Major George W. Schofield, surprised and captured a large Indian camp near Elk Creek on the Staked Plains in the Texas Panhandle. The plate depicts the 'personal combat' that took place between Private Alfred Pinkston, Company M, 10th Cavalry, and a Comanche warrior. After a violent struggle, the Indian fell dead from a saber thrust. Pinkston wears the campaign uniform prescribed for cavalry in 1872. This consisted of a plaited blouse with yellow cavalry piping, and a black, folding hat. Neither of these items of clothing proved to be very popular with the troops! He also wears 1872-pattern sky blue kersey trousers and 1872-pattern boots. He wields a Model 1860 Light Cavalry saber, and has a Model 1873 Springfield carbine attached to his carbine sling. His equipment consists of one of the 50 sets of 1872-pattern cavalry brace systems that his company was issued with for trial purposes during July–September 1874. He is seated in an 1872 modification of the 1859 McClellan saddle, and his plain grey woolen saddle blanket is army issue.

D: ON CAMPAIGN, 1872–1891

As with all units of the Frontier Army, the buffalo soldiers looked very different from their parade ground appearance when on campaign. The 10th Cavalry sergeant (**D1**), circa 1872, wears a civilian 'fireman'-style shirt with plastron front, and crossed sabers crudely embroidered on each side of the falling collar. His misshapen headgear indicates how unsuitable the 1872-pattern campaign hat was for field service. The only signs of his rank are the one-inch seam stripes on his 1861-pattern sky blue kersey trousers. He carries a Model 1865 trial Spencer repeating carbine in his hand, and has a Remington .44 New Model Army revolver tucked in his 1863-pattern black leather holster. His equipment includes a Blakeslee cartridge box slung over his right shoulder, plus a percussion pouch attached to his waist belt to facilitate carrying pistol ammunition. He has a non-regulation blanket draped over the pommel of his 1859-pattern McClellan saddle. The 9th Cavalry trooper (**D2**), circa 1884, is dressed in an 1882-pattern shirt with yellow piping, an 1882-pattern campaign hat with 'Brachers' Patent Ventilators and yellow cord. His colorful civilian neckerchief or bandana was standard, but non-regulation, campaign wear. His 1872-pattern sky blue kersey trousers are reinforced with buckskin on seat and inner leg, and are tucked into 1876-pattern boots. Fastened by a yellow metal 'H' plate, his blue woven 1881-pattern Mills belt has yellow painted selvages, or edging. He carries a Model 1873 Springfield 'Trapdoor'. The 25th Infantry enlisted man (**D3**), circa 1890, wears clothing suitable for the harsh northern winters. His double-breasted buffalo-skin overcoat is worn over an 1884-pattern blouse, underneath which is a non-regulation vest or waistcoat. Headgear consists of an 1872-pattern forage cap with 1875-pattern crossed rifles insignia in front. 1876-pattern arctic overshoes of canvas and rubber protect his feet. He is armed with a Model 1873 Springfield rifle.

E: OLD FORT TOLEROSA, 1880

At dusk on May 14, 1880, over 100 Warm Springs Apaches, led by the renegade chief Victorio, attacked Old Fort Tolerosa, an abandoned Indian agency about 50 miles northwest of Ojo Caliente, in New Mexico. Inside the hastily repaired stockade, Sergeant George Jordan, commanding 25 troopers of Company K, 9th Cavalry, was all that stood between the local settlers and certain death. The plate shows the first clash of arms as the Apaches tried to rush the defenses. Sergeant Jordan and a squad of black troopers are dressed in a mixture of 1876-pattern, black wool campaign hats with 'Brasher' spinner ventilator on each side of the crown, plus civilian brimmed hats. Despite the intense desert heat, Sergeant Jordan wears the 1874-pattern blouse with branch service trim removed, while others have stripped down to their shirt sleeves. They are armed with 'Trapdoor' carbines and Model 1873, .45-caliber Colt Cavalry revolvers. Their equipment includes 1876-pattern, Type 3, tan canvas and leather 'prairie belts' with revolver cartridge pouch and holster attached, plus Dyer ammunition pouches.

F: GARRISON LIFE, 1882–1891

The mounted 10th Cavalry trooper (**F1**) wears an 1884-pattern, five-button, blouse with external pockets; 1884-pattern leather gauntlets; 1882-pattern sky blue kersey trousers with reinforced saddle-piece and legs slightly flared to wear over boots; and an 1882-pattern enlisted man's helmet covered in off-white drill. His waist belt supports a Typer II McKeever cartridge box; a pattern-1872 holster containing a Model 1873, .45 Colt Cavalry revolver; and a Model 1860 Light Cavalry saber in a light metal scabbard. He is also armed with a Model 1885 Springfield carbine in 1885-pattern saddle boot. He sits in an 1874-pattern McClellan saddle and equipment. The 24th Infantry corporal (**F2**) wears the new full dress uniform with white facings prescribed for infantry via General Order No. 120, issued on October 24, 1884. His Prussian style, black felt-

Four troops of the 9th Cavalry parade at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, in 1888. (Nebraska State Historical Society)

These gregarious members of the 25th Infantry were photographed in the snow at Fort Keogh, Montana, in 1890. Many of them wear buffalo coats, muskrat caps and gauntlets. (Library of Congress)

covered, helmet was introduced in 1881, and had 'crossed rifle' side buttons, and the regimental designation in German silver numerals in the shield on the eagle plate. The bandsman of the 25th Infantry (**F3**) is distinguished by the white herringbone braid across the chest, plus the white cord shoulder knots with aiguillette. His mounted helmet, authorized in 1885, bears a German silver lyre on its eagle plate, but is without the white plume worn by many regimental bands. The brown canvas uniform worn by the cavalry trooper on fatigue duty (**F4**) was introduced in 1884. Fastened with six India rubber buttons, it has an outside pocket sewn on each breast. He also wears an 1883-pattern drab campaign hat and 1885-pattern crimped campaign shoes.

G: DREXEL MISSION, 1890

On December 30, 1890, a battalion of the 9th Cavalry, commanded by Major Guy Henry, rode to the rescue of Lieutenant-Colonel James W. Forsyth and eight troops of the 7th Cavalry, who had been ambushed and surrounded by about 400 Indians led by Chiefs Little Wound and Two-Strike near the Drexel Mission at White Clay Creek, in Dakota Territory. Using the element of surprise, the buffalo soldiers hacked their way through the hostiles to the relief of their white comrades. They are depicted charging through the snow wearing both 1883-pattern drab campaign hats and 1878-pattern muskrat caps. Some wear 1885-pattern muskrat mittens. Their 1884-pattern blouses have external pockets, while their 1882-pattern 'sky blue' kersey trousers have reinforced saddle pieces, and are tucked into 1872-pattern boots. One trooper wears an 1883-pattern canvas overcoat.They are armed with .45-caliber Colt revolvers and Model 1885 Springfield carbines. Their equipment consists of tan woven carbine cartridge belts, to which are attached Forsyth modified 1881-pattern holsters. They are seated in 1885-pattern McClellan saddles and equipment.

Troop I of the 10th Cavalry practice a charge with drawn sabers during the 1890s. The commanding officer sports non-regulation clothing, while the men wear 1889-pattern campaign hats, 1883-pattern blue over-shirts, and 1890-pattern lace-up brown canvas cavalry leggings (Nebraska State Historical Society)

H: FLAGS, INSIGNIA, AND EQUIPMENT

(1) The yellow silk regimental flag of the 10th Cavalry, circa 1890. The 10th Cavalry did not receive a regulation silk-embroidered standard upon organization, and for many years carried a flag made by the men. (2) The red and white 1885-pattern company guidon of Troop H, 9th Cavalry. (3) 1872-pattern officer's dress helmet eagle plate for 10th Cavalry. (4) Dress coat 1876-pattern, medium blue shoulder knots for a major of 24th Infantry. (5) Dress coat 1881-pattern, yellow shoulder knots for colonel of 9th Cavalry. (6) Dress coat 1886-pattern white shoulder knots for captain of 25th Infantry. (7) 1876-pattern Crossed sabers cap device, Company L, 9th Cavalry. (8) 1881-Pattern helmet plate for enlisted man of the 9th Cavalry. (9) 1876-pattern Crossed Rifles cap device, Company B, 24th Infantry.

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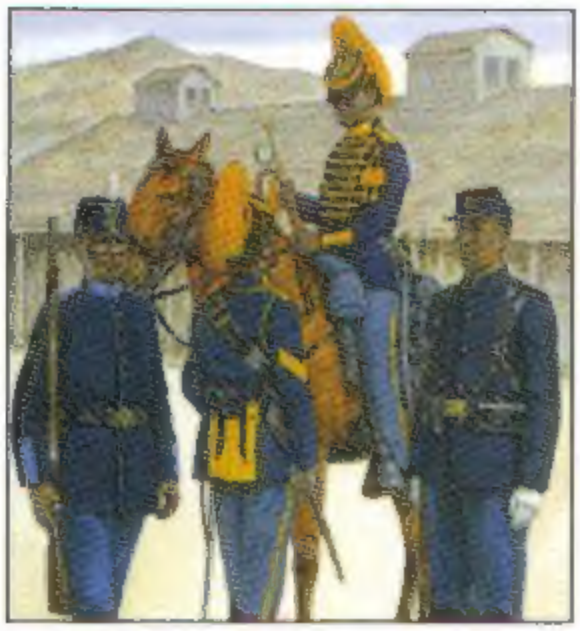

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